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Orita

African Traditional Religion

The 1973 Religious Studies Conference

Idowu

What is Freedom ?

Akinjide

The Political View of Freedom

Doi

The Islamic View of Freedom

Falusi

The Christian View of Freedom

Symposium

VII/2 December 1973

ONE NAIRA

(in Nigeria)

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Statement of Purpose

The aim of the Development of Religious Studies at the University of Ibadan is to promote the study and understanding of "the phenomenon and the social implications of religion in general and religion in Africa in particular". This involves more specifically "the field of history and phenomenology of religions, theology and philosophy, aiming at an interpretation and understanding of *African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam*, separately and in so far as there has been cross-fertilization between them".

The Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies contributes to the fulfilment of this purpose.

Every effort will be made to give an equal amount of space to articles and reviews dealing with each of the three Faiths; and to encourage articles which treat their interaction. The phenomenon of secularization, which represents a common problem for them all, will also not be neglected.

'Orita'

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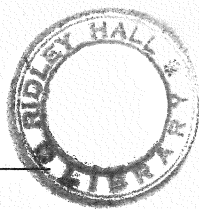
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"God made man in his own image. Consequently, there is created in man the immanent norm of growth and development; if he freely observes and respects it, his growth and development will be proper; if he refuses to observe and respect it, he is sure to have a distorted, abnormal growth. . . . Man finds freedom when he offers himself whole-heartedly to his Maker."

What is Freedom?

E. BOLAJI IDOWU

THE general theme for our last Conference was, "What is Man?" During that Conference, one word kept coming up again and again, especially during discussions. That was the word "freedom". It came up inevitably as we tried to grapple in discussion with the enigma that is Man. It is, therefore, logical that the word or concept that engaged our attention so much should commend itself as the main theme for the immediately subsequent Conference.

Freedom, as an age-old or time-honoured word or concept, has passed through several phases or shades of definitions and interpretations—definitions and interpretations ranging from those which correctly see freedom as of the inherent nature of man, to those which have sought to see it in terms of the variety in man's self-interest and convenience. One thing is certain: the relational chaos which characterizes our world today is due largely to wrong definitions or erroneous practical interpretations of freedom.

To begin with, let us take an example. When I was the minister in charge of the Northern Nigeria Mission of the Methodist Church with its headquarters in Jos, I observed, in a certain connection, several women who appeared to me to be single. That was puzzling, because they were—most of them—people who should be with their husbands. Consequently, I asked the catechist who was then my colleague, "Where are the husbands of these women?" He answered promptly and nonchalantly, "They are free women". He then went on to explain that these were women who were not attached by marriage to any husbands, but were instant

clients to any men who approached them on agreeable terms. The point here is that in this case, we see one way of applying the word freedom. People who were hiring themselves out indiscriminately to feed men's lust were described as "free" persons.

A similar way of interpreting and applying "freedom" is now spreading alarmingly among the young people of today. It is not uncommon to hear an educated young woman saying, "I am not going to have myself tied down. I want my freedom; I may have children; but I must be free to change the person with whom I have intimate relations as occasion demands". And several of us have heard of certain married couples who have reached the brink of the marital and personal disaster called divorce saying, "I want my freedom" or "Give me my freedom" or "I claim my freedom", and other words of such import. As parents, teachers, and guardians, we know by experience—often painful experience—that these are days when young people are clamouring more and more for their freedom. Often, to their parents or guardians they use such expressions as, "You do not know how to handle us"; or, "You do not understand modern trends"; or, "After all, I am over 21"—all of which amount to saying, "Stop interfering; I am now a free person; leave me alone to use my freedom in my own way". One meets girls today who are painting themselves somewhat too liberally and one tries to advise them, only to receive the retort, "I know what I am doing". Thus we have various ways in which individual or personal freedom has been misinterpreted or abused.

When we move from individual persons to corporate bodies like the community, society or a nation, we meet the same variety of definitions and practical interpretations of freedom. Let us take, for example, the case of the United States of America. In the Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln began, *inter-alia*, by saying, "... our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal..." Liberty and equality: high sounding, hope-raising, laudable concepts. But how many Americans, and how many of us, appreciate the fact that the problem of America today has its source in the application of this concept? Liberty and equality: to translate this into the business of

daily living has been the perpetual predicament of the United States of America. The truth is that liberty and equality were conceived to form a harmonious norm of life, but in consequence of the vagaries of the human mind, of man's selfish propensities, they have, more often than not, become disparate elements: they do not mix together properly where liberty is interpreted in terms of the strong using their strength without due regard to the well-being of the weak; where the rich use the power of wealth, not only to acquire more wealth by any cut-throat means available to them, but also in sheer disregard of the plight of the "have-nots" and with a view to the extermination of these, if expediency thus dictates. Let us look at our own country, as an example. Time was when we were under British rule. Then came the period of our yearning for freedom from imperialism, followed by the current period when we have actually become physically independent as a country. We all know now, however, as a disillusioned people, that freedom does not essentially consist in physical independence from a foreign ruler, but is essentially a thing of the mind—a positive, creative, dynamic spiritual quality. Today, we are under a cloud because we are not far from the situation described in the Bible—the period when there were no kings in Israel and everyone did that which was right in his own eyes. And what will save us from our current predicament is the correct interpretation of freedom in the practical business of our daily living.

Now the question, "What is freedom?" An answer to the question should not be attempted at this stage, that is, until we have tried to answer a more urgent question: "Is there anything called freedom in the absolute sense?"

The ancient Greeks looked at this question and came, generally, to the conclusion that there was nothing like absolute freedom; freedom was relative to the circumstances which determined the person's being. Always, they thought, one could not go beyond the dictates of fate. They spoke of *ananke*, "Necessity", and emphasized that not even the father of the gods, Zeus, was free: for *ananke* was always standing behind Zeus dictating or determining his action.

Certain Old Testament prophets and certain of the New Testament writers seem to be of this same persuasion. For example, in Isaiah 45: 6-7 we read, "I am the Lord and there

is no other. I form light and create darkness. I make weal and create woe. I am the Lord Who do all these things". The implication is that if Yahweh causes it all, then in what way can man claim to be free? We have in St John's gospel the words, "No one can come to me unless the Father draws him" (see John 6:44)—a passage which has always raised an embarrassing theological question. There is also the question of the moral predicament raised by St Paul in Romans, chapter 7. "I do not understand my own actions for I do not do what I want, but I do the very things I hate . . . For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death . . . ? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

In Islam, we have the doctrine of predestination, which seems to emphasize that man is under the unbending iron will of Allah and that whatever man's action, whatever the issues of life, they are not outside the will and sanction of Allah.

From the context of African Traditional belief, we may quote a Nupe song which has it that "Should you do anything that is beautiful, Soko (God) has caused it to be beautiful. Should you do anything that is evil, Soko has caused it to be evil".

All these bring us to the fact that the sum total of man's daunting, frustrating experience has led some to propound the theory of "metaphysical determinism" as an explanation for the issues of life which appear to be beyond man's control. This is a theory which has been exhaustively discussed by Canon Peter Green in his book, *The Problem of Right Conduct*. What it says, in simple terms, is that all that we do is predetermined. You are what you are because that is the way you have been made. I am what I am; I cannot help behaving in the way that I am behaving. There is no need to blame anybody.

We find, however, that the shifting of responsibility to a predetermining or dictating deity or a metaphysical force does not offer a permanent answer to man's question. There is something in him which says that the factor of determinism may be part of the answer, but that it is not *the* answer. For example, the doctrine of metaphysical determinism cannot, in the practical business of daily living, be accepted to its

logical conclusion. If we could accept it, there would be no need for you to be angry with me if I spit in your face; there would be no need for you or me to be unhappy about certain things dealt to us by our fellowmen or by life. The doctrine has something to its credit, however; it is grappling with one of the main predicaments of life. Why is it easy for some to be good and very difficult for others, in spite of the knowledge of what is good and the desire or even the will to be good? In looking at this question, St Teresa has made a very apt observation. We summarize what she says to be this, in effect. For some, the spiritual life is as easy as going up or down in an escalator or going up or down in an automatic lift. For some, it is like climbing a convenient staircase. For some, it is like climbing a high, inconvenient staircase. For some, it is like climbing a hill with adequate foot holds, while for others, it is like climbing a hill without any foot-holds at all. For some, it is next to impossible, if not altogether impossible. We find this same note of determinism in St Paul, St Augustine, and Calvin. These men of God looked from what they had been to what they were, and could only see the hand of God making new people of them with little contribution from themselves.

In his book, *Grammar of Politics*, Harold J. Laskie almost denies the possibility of freedom at all in society. One of his examples will suffice. He observes that one cannot speak of a free judiciary: the state appoints the judiciary; ostensibly, the judiciary must implement the laws of the state, but a judiciary that becomes refractory, or constitutes itself to be non-conforming to the will of the powers that be, will automatically lose its job. We know examples of that throughout the course of history.

And freedom becomes the more difficult to define when we think of it in regard to the omnipotence of God. It has become an axiom that two masters cannot be in a boat. If God is omnipotent, how do we reconcile man's absolute freedom with that fact? What omnipotence will look on while a whole world of men created by Him is in total rebellion against Him? As we have said, the Old Testament, in a way, seeks to solve this problem by saying that everything owes its existence to Yahweh.

However, religious man has always found it difficult to accept that God is responsible for man's abuse of freedom;

and consequently, where he feels strongly that God is not acting promptly enough, he has often arrogated to himself the power to bring rebellious man to his senses or to total destruction. The war on the unbelievers by Zoroaster, the Islamic Jihads, the Crusades and all other sanctified crimes are, wittingly or unwittingly, results of man's attempt to assist an apparently defaulting deity to manage his creatures. Thus, we see that whichever way we look at freedom, we are in difficulty. And yet, there must be a way out, and there is.

First, let us begin by saying what freedom is not. It is not unrestricted, unrestrained movement, action, or behaviour on the part of man. Anything that answers that description is not freedom. That would be licence. Licence is the characteristic of a disorganized, disintegrated or disintegrating personality, the fruit of whose issues of life is chaos or anarchy. Secondly, what, then, is freedom? Freedom is regulated movement, regulated action, regulated demeanour, regulated behaviour. It is the inherent, ontological quality of an organized, integrated personality. Freedom is thus a relational fact: it presupposes man as a being-in-relation; the person who is truly free is the person who knows that man is free to move, but not to move anywhere and everywhere indiscriminately, because there are hedges to other persons' properties; there are bounds of propriety beyond which he must not go. A truly free person is, therefore, one who has the inner control—self control—to look carefully before he leaps and to guide his leaps. Freedom thus means the ability to say an emphatic, practical "Yes" to that which is good and proper, whatever the consequences. It means the essential automatic inner control by which man says "No" to that which is wrong and behaves accordingly, come what may. Freedom implies the ability to accept, unflinchingly, the consequences of one's own ontological good principles.

Perhaps, by now, you see why omnipotence permits man's freedom. God made man in his own image. Consequently, there is created in man the immanent norm of growth and development; if he freely observes and respects it, his growth and development will be proper; if he refuses to observe and respect it, he is sure to have a distorted, abnormal growth. Of the essence of man's personality is freedom. Freedom to accept or refuse the law of God which is the law of his own well being. Omnipotence Himself cannot violate man's

existence by depriving him of freedom, because by putting his image into man, he has created him to be a real person. When man allowed his freedom to become a snare, the Incarnation was, and is, God's answer. The Incarnation is a demonstration of the fact that it is possible for man to live a fulfilled life in a difficult world. A life in obedience to God, in correct acceptance of man's immanent norm. The Incarnation says that God can take His own medicine. And that is why on the Mount of the Temptations, throughout the ministry of Jesus Christ, in Gesthesmane, on the Cross, Omnipotence was waiting upon man's decision, for man himself to decide, voluntarily, to accept to be a real person. We are thus presented with the symbol of real freedom. Freedom to act strictly and undeviatingly, according to the immanent law of positive "Yes" to good, and positive "No", to evil.

Thus the Christian paradox. Man finds freedom when he offers himself whole-heartedly to his Maker:

Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be.

"... for a healthy growth of genuine political freedom in the new nations of the world, the following fundamental norms must be preserved: the rule of the majority; the right of the minority to dissent; the separation of politics and the military; an independent and incorruptible judiciary; and freedom of the press."

The Political View of Freedom

RICHARD O. A. AKINJIDE

POLITICS, they say, is a dirty game. I disagree. I think politics is a clean and devoted service and it is only dirty men with dirty minds that turn it into a dirty game. And what are the consequences of eschewing it? Someone has rightly said:

The punishment which people suffer by not going into politics is that they allow themselves to be ruled by the bad ones.

If you devoted people say: "politics is evil, politics is bad, we opt out"; well, you will still be governed; you will still be ruled by somebody; but the irony is that you might be ruled by somebody you hate, someone you don't like, and once he is in power, you have to obey his dictates, you have to obey his laws, you have to obey his measures. So, gentlemen, let us correct the impression that politics is basically evil. It is not. It is no more evil than any other thing: religion, eating food or even sleeping.

Now to the subject of the lecture of this morning. It is, as I was given, "The Political View of Freedom". To my mind, Mr Chairman, there are two operative words in this subject. The first is the word *Political*, and the second is the word *Freedom*. In political terms, we probably get as many definitions of "political" as there are systems in the world. The communists give you their own definition of "political". So also do the British, the Americans and the fascists. There appears to me to be really no objective definition of "political" and, I think, the definition must of necessity be subjective. It is the same thing with "freedom". Under the communist

system, communists talk of freedom; under the fascist system, fascists claim there is freedom; under the parliamentary form of government, they claim there is freedom; under a dictatorship, they claim there is freedom; under the military, they say there is freedom, under the papacy, they say there is freedom.

What then is freedom? Again, it is virtually impossible to get an objective definition of freedom. I think it is bound to be subjective. Not only subjective—even in subjective terms, it must vary from generation to generation, from age to age, and even from people to people. What we would like to regard as freedom in Nigeria, for instance, or, say, in Africa, might not, to a Briton or a Frenchman or an American, be freedom. But I will take the broad dictionary meaning of these two words, and I will start off with the dictionary definition of the word *Political*.

Political, it is said, means “of the State”, or “of its Government”, or “of public affairs”. Then we are told it also means “of politics”, though this is really begging the question. Then it is said “of public affairs”, “of States or Governments”. I don’t think that in view of these conclusions and the various views which many writers and many political scientists have taken of politics all over the world, from generation to generation and from age to age, the dictionary could have done better. The dictionary again defines *freedom* in terms of “personal liberty”, “a state of non-slavery”, “civil liberty”, and lastly “independence”. In other words, slavery is the antithesis of freedom. From these definitions, a number of things emerge. First of all, political freedom might relate to an individual. Is a particular territory politically free or is it politically unfree? Then follow the rhetorical questions: Is an individual politically free or is he politically unfree? So, merging the two words together in an attempt to define them you could relate them not only to territory, but also relate them to an individual.

As I said at the beginning, these two words are nothing new. They had been ringing bell as far back as the time when Adam and Eve were created (‘created’ is the word; they were never born!). During the time of the ancient Greeks, the Greeks valued their freedom and participatory politics so much that it was necessary, in order to pass measures, for an assembly of people to vote and take decisions on all

matters. That was quite possible in those days because the population was few. Maybe the population of those voting was not more than two or three hundred. If an old road was to be improved, if a new road was to be constructed, if a new theatre was to be built, it was necessary to gather all the people in the arena and then ask them: "Do you want this to be done or not?" That was an expression of political freedom. It was not a question of a representative government whereby a number of people packed into an assembly or a hall pass a bill into a law which becomes a norm which everybody must obey. That was the theme of political freedom in those days.

Let's go to the Romans. Roman citizenship in those days was a very valuable commodity. For a person to be able to say *civis romanus sum* was very important indeed. "I am a Roman citizen" meant "I am a free man. I am not a slave". He could walk on the street with his head up. And one of the attributes of that citizenship was that he was free virtually to do anything. You probably remember that the Roman world extended far and wide; it is not the world of today as we know it. At that time, only the coastal part of North Africa was discovered—what was called the littoral part of the Mediterranean sea-board. There was no question of America, there was no question of Australia, and maybe, they heard faintly of China. But what happened at that time? The Romans had a very vast empire of which France and Britain formed part. And according to the Aeneid and Livy, when the Romans entered Britain, they found father marrying daughter, and their women painting their faces with woad. So vast and so powerful was the Roman empire in those days that even Britain, which later created a large Empire, an empire on which "the sun never set", formed part and parcel of the Roman Empire. Not for two years, not for 50 years; but for centuries. It was then unthinkable for a Briton to say, *civis romanus sum*. Of course he could not, because, politically, he was not free. In other words, in the terms of our definition, he was in a state of slavery.

Back in Rome itself, you could see from some literature, the reading of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, what the state of affairs looked like in those days. There was the Senate, they had Senators, an elected body for taking decisions. The will of the people was expressed through their elected represen-

tatives, who were elected to the Senate to hold meetings, and pass legislation. For the Empire, the Romans administered what they called *Pax Romana*—the Roman view of freedom; the Roman Peace, the Roman Law and Order, to all parts of their empire.

These are historical analyses of the pre-mediaeval period. Then what of the Middle Ages? Political freedom was interwoven with religious freedom, particularly in Europe, where the Pope was dominant and the Papal Bull was law virtually everywhere, even in lands which were never physically discovered. Once the Pope had spoken, that was the end of the matter. And the Church, the Roman Catholic Church with St Peter's Basilica at the apex, had the last word. And like the British Empire later on, the Pope, in a political sense, controlled an empire over which the Roman Catholic Church held sway. Then came the dichotomy between the Church and the State, which was basically political and in the context of political freedom: the domination of State by Church or the supremacy of the Church over the State. This is a field which, I am sure, you know better than I do. But this was a matter which, particularly in Europe, ranged for centuries between the various warring interests and also developed into real rebellion against the papacy, against Rome, resulting in the establishment of what is called the Church of England. King Henry VIII nationalised the Church and made himself its head. Of course, you know the role people like Martin Luther played, and many people, because of their conscience, preferred to be shipped, bag and baggage, not only to other parts of Europe, but also completely out of Europe to parts of America and other lands.

What of the modern trends? When I say modern trends, I don't mean yesterday or today or last year or ten years ago. In this wise, I will include even the French Revolution. I am sure you all know the causes of the French Revolution at the time of Louis XVI, in the state of France. It was usual in those days for French Kings even before Louis XVI to say rhetorically "I am the State". Things were so bad that when the French Revolution was in the offing and the workers of France struck, asking not only for political freedom, but also for economic freedom, the wife of Louis XVI, Marie, said "What is the problem? Why are they going on strike? Why are they marching? What is the cause of all these

troubles?" She was told. "Well, it is because they cannot get bread". "Well, if they cannot get bread", she replied, "let them go and buy cake"! That demonstrates clearly the gap between the ruler and the ruled; between the governor and the governed. Somebody unable to afford bread, who cannot get bread to buy, how could he afford to buy cake? You know the results; the Royal Palace was demolished and that was the end of the monarchy in France. Again, that was an expression of political freedom.

Let's go outside Europe, to China. You find that the Chinese had a very great civilization. They were very great people; but what happened? They suffered what is called political decadence, economic decadence, all resulting in the loss of their political freedom. And as usual, the Europeans were very smart. They took advantage of this, pounced upon them and started a kind of colonial system. When the Chinese resisted and Europeans turned deaf ears—the Opium Wars followed. The Europeans carried opium to China, doped Chinese and, of course, as usual in history, they went to Shanghai and other centres, established religious centres, held a Bible in one hand and their merchants on the other hand went from place to place, packing the wealth of China back to Europe. When the Chinese resisted, saying "Well, we won't have anything of this", there followed what the European writers called the Opium Wars. I won't call it Opium Wars. I will prefer to call it the War of Independence: the struggle against suppression.

Later, in this political and historical sequence, there was the American Revolution. I think, Mr Chairman, that the American Revolution so far is the greatest Revolution in history because for the first time a group of people rose up against their rulers and broke their chains. It had never happened before in history. It is not for me to go into the causes of the American Revolution. But it is quite relevant to the expression of political freedom. What was involved was politics, what was involved was the issue of freedom. The circumstances under which many of the American colonies were settled were basically political: people running away from political oppression in Europe, people trying to avoid religious persecution in Europe. When they got to America, they found themselves not in new freedom but forcibly in new chains. And there were the Indian Wars and

the Anglo-French wars. During that period, Britain was slack in the enforcement of her laws on the North American colonies, and the colonies got used to trading with other parts of the world, getting things more cheaply. It was no longer a question of Britain dumping manufactured goods on the colonies and taking back their raw materials. So, after the wars with the French and after the Indian wars, the British had no choice (these wars ended in about 1763), in order to reinforce their authority, but to pass in 1764 what they called the Sugar Act, and in 1765, the Stamp Act, and also in 1773, the Tea Act. These three legislations were really the immediate causes of the American Revolution. The British Prime Minister in London was completely out of touch, for a number of reasons, communication-wise as well as political. Sometimes it took eight to nine months to travel from England to North America. And of course, George III, the King of England, sat on his throne at the Palace of Westminster issuing edicts like the Pope and expecting the American colonies to obey. Of course, they refused. They rebelled. And the result was the Declaration of Independence by the Americans in June, 1776. Well, Mr Chairman, I have read and re-read it, and each time I read I gain something from the Declaration of American Independence. This document seems to me to be a great watershed in the history of mankind. If you read it, you find that it is just like a criminal indictment, as if you put someone in the dock and you tell the jury his crime, his offences, and what he has done. The American colonists in a very adroit way placed the British on the altar of world opinion and for generations unborn. "These are the facts. If you are in our shoes, will you accept all these? In political terms! In economic terms! This is the way we are being treated." And under the leadership of Jefferson and others, the American became free and free for ever! That was an aspect of political freedom.

Then, Mr Chairman, with the loss of the American colonies, Britain had to find markets to buy her raw materials and to sell her manufactured goods. She had to find raw materials to fill her factories. Britain turned to India. India became more important than ever before. In order to get India, Africa became a factor. Why? Little do many of us realise that the need for India became the cause of the real imperialism and political tutelage being established in Africa.

And I will tell you why. For Britain to be able to control, politically and economically, the Indian sub-continent, it was necessary for Britain to have quick and free access to India. If Britain, from Europe, must have quick and free access to India, then the Suez Canal became a factor. Mr Chairman, we have to cast our minds back. It was not a jet age—no aircraft at all. It was then a question of steamships taking months and months to travel from one place to other. For access to India, quick and free, the Suez Canal was a factor; and if Britain must control the Suez Canal, she has to control Egypt. Therefore just as the Suez Canal is relevant for access to India, so also was Egypt relevant for the control of the Suez Canal. And if Britain must control Egypt, she has to control Sudan. And if Britain must control Sudan, she must control the River Nile. And if Britain must control the River Nile, she must control the territory now known as Uganda. And if Britain must control Uganda, she has to control the source of River Nile. And if Britain must control the source of the Nile, she must have free access to the eastern seaboard. And if she must have free access to the eastern seaboard, she must control Kenya. Mr Chairman, from the need to have free access to India, Britain straight-away, had a chain of empires stretching right from Cairo to Uganda, to Nairobi and to Mombasa. That is exactly one of the historical causes for the establishment of the British empire in that part of Africa. Of course, the reasons for the establishment of the British Empire in West Africa are quite different, but that is quite irrelevant to the subject of India. So that as the British were trying to control India, they were *pari passu* establishing another empire in Africa; and a substantial part of the Africans were losing their political freedom. Well, India was said to be the greatest jewel in the British Crown. And the King of England was not just the King of India, he was King—Emperor. And there was lots of pomp and pageantry. The reason is quite clear. It was not because the British politically loved the Indians, it was not because in religious terms, the British were very benevolent, the reason was what it is today: the economy—the gold and the silver of India, or in short, the wealth of India. Of course you will remember that in order to get the wealth of India, the Indians were made to lose their political freedom. And you also probably remember the way Warren Hastings politically

suppressed the freedom of the Indian princes, the Maharajahs, and, of course, you also remember that some British liberals in the House of Commons found it so revolting that they felt that Warren Hastings should be impeached, and he was impeached by Parliament. And you remember the famous statement of his defence in the House of Commons. His counsel thundered, "If Warren Hastings has oppressed anyone, he has oppressed the oppressors!" But was that an answer? Of course, no! In terms of forensic argument, it was a farce. It was an exercise in rhetoric. In debates, you can make the worst cause look like the best, and the best cause look like the worst, depending upon the way you can manipulate your audience and the English language, or whatever is the medium of your communication. But the fact remains that Britain, and the British in India, committed very hideous atrocities for economic reasons simply because they wanted to plunder the wealth of India.

I come to Africa straight-away, and I talk of what I will call Europe and African dominance. You remember that after the industrial revolution, it became necessary for Britain, first of all, to have more markets for their products; and also more markets for their capital. This is where, apart from the accidental seizure of the north-eastern parts, it became necessary for them to have a hold on Africa. If you look at the map of Africa, before the end of the First World War, you find that all the colonies in Africa were owned by the European: the German, the Italian, the French, the British, the Spaniard, the Portuguese. And without your consent, without my consent, in 1885 the Europeans gathered in Berlin, and with a stroke of the pen divided Africa among themselves. This is one of the greatest tragedies of history.

But later, nemesis stepped in via the Second World War. After the war, Berlin—the capital where Africa was mutilated—was divided into sectors controlled by the Allied Powers and Germany herself divided into Zones. All this was done without the consent of the Germans. Thus, what was done to Africa in 1885 was visited upon Germany and Berlin in 1945. And it is a matter for speculation whether Germany could ever be one again. Today, you have Africa divided into three groups, three virtually irreconcilable groups. In the northern littoral part you have the Arabs, with their own problems. Although geographically they are in Africa,

let's face it, politically and culturally, they are not Africans, They have their problems with the Jews, and therefore the Americans. And if you come down to Africa south of the Sahara, and north of the Zambezi River, you have the Black Africa which is ruled by the black people. In Africa south of the Zambezi River, you have Africa ruled by the whites. Rhodesia, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia and Angola. Whether South Africa or Rhodesia will ever again be ruled by the black man is a matter for the future, and is not a matter on which anybody can easily speculate. But this is one of the fruits of imperialism and European political tutelage in Africa. Who are the people in Rhodesia? Who are the people in South Africa? They are Europeans. They are just extensions of Europe.

Let's relate political freedom to political system. Let's take capitalism, for instance. The Americans represent what is called capitalism in the world, and under the system, they claim there is political freedom, in the sense that, in theory, you are free to do whatever you like. But is it really so? I have my doubts. Under the American system you have the choice between two parties. You have the G.O.P (what they call the Grand Old Party) as represented by the Republican Party, and also the Democratic Party. But the difference between the two of them is without any distinction, and in any election, although you are told you have political freedom, you just have to choose one of the two. And for economic reasons, and financial reasons, it is virtually impossible for any third force to emerge. That is a form of political freedom, under the capitalist system. The capitalist system will also include places like Britain because Britain is basically capitalistic, and even the average socialist in England is basically conservative in that he rarely wants a change. He would want what was existing in 1920 to be valid in 1945 and valid in 1975. And what is more: as far as the Western world, which I call capitalist, is concerned, they accept any form of government, however oppressive, provided it is against communism. If you examine the American foreign policy, and look at the map of the world, you find that in some areas, the American government supports a politically corrupt government, like that of South Vietnam, the government of Thieu. Why? because it is against communism! Because it supports the United States! And if you go

to the Latin American countries, you find the United States supporting pure dictatorship. Why? Because they are against communism. Because they support the United States! That is their own sense of political freedom. If you leave capitalism, and examine the other side of the coin, that is, communism, they too claim they have freedom. Mr Chairman, between 1918 and now, virtually half of the world has gone under communism. This is a fact of life you've got to accept. From the time the Tsar was overthrown and the provisional government of Kerensky installed in Russia, and up to the time (1949) when the Chinese Revolution was completed, virtually half of the human race came under the communist system. I am not saying it is right; I am not saying it is justified; I am not saying it is wrong, but this is a fact of history which we ignore at our own peril. Of course, we know why all these happened. It could not have happened in a vacuum. What is going to happen in 5 years' time? What is going to happen in 15 years' time? What is going to happen in 100 years' time? I was told that there is what is called the myth of capitalism; that you cannot underrate not only the myth of capitalism. But how far that is valid, I don't know, because the American system appears to me like a good road; you put a motor car on it, you are doing 100 m.p.h., but at the end of that road is a precipice and unless you reduce your speed or stop completely, you just find yourself inside. This is a fact many Americans will not like to accept. But the events of the past five years, when the dollar had to be devalued twice, I think are a lesson to the Americans and to the Western world, and I hope they got the message. But basically and politically the Americans are like a sick person who refuses to take medicine. And, you know the result! Even Britain with all the parliamentary form of government, all the system, is now in crisis, in real trouble, and some of their statesmen who are frank enough are admitting as much. Mr Chairman, I should not be taken as saying that communism is the alternative or that it is better; but what I am saying, which is a fact, is that there is real crisis; crisis of politics, crisis of political freedom under, possibly, all the systems. I don't want to go into the details of Nazism, that is no more there. But you remember the role it played in Italy, and also in Germany as regards political freedom. That was really a phenomenon, it was a reaction

against action. When the First World War finished, and the victors published the Treaty of Versailles, the Germans accepted it with equanimity. They hoped one day something would happen. God give them Hitler who emerged in 1933 at a time when 6 million Germans were unemployed, and by 1939 we found ourselves in another World War. Hitler was an evil man—he caused a lot of misery, he caused a lot of death, he threw the world into chaos—but you cannot but accept that Hitler is one of the notable men the world has ever produced. This is a fact, he may be evil but the Europeans and Americans and all the world continue to produce books on him every year. To all, he is an evil man, but I can assure you, to many Germans, he is a great man, although they won't admit that publicly. They will say it in the privacy of their rooms.

In relation to political freedom, which, as I have said, Mr Chairman, cannot be divorced from economic freedom, I want us to note something which is also an important phenomenon and which must be underlined particularly by the Africans. After the Second World War, Japan and Germany became vanquished: politically they were *non est*; economically, they were nothing. The *yen* was worthless, the German *mark* was worthless. This was 25 years ago. But today, what happens? Both Germany and Japan now dictate to the capitalist world economically. The Japanese yen and the German mark are the two strongest currencies in the world today. The Americans run after yen. The Europeans run after yen. The Americans run after the German mark. The Europeans run after the German mark, just as a young man runs after a young beautiful lady! But why had this happened? Nations which 25 years ago were right out of grace down to the grass, 25 years later became the most powerful nations economically in the world and even in a position to dictate to the United States which conquered them; in a position to dictate to the European nations, Britain and France, which conquered them. The lesson from that is obvious for the Africans. Why are we unable to do it? I'll try to touch it later when I deal in a very scanty manner with the military in African politics. But this is something which is possible, this is something which we can do, and if we don't do it, the fault is not that of the European, is not that of the Americans, is not that of anybody, the

fault will be in ourselves, because in politics, in international affairs, in international politics, the primary factor is what is called *self-interest*. Don't think Britain will talk to Nigeria, or trade with Nigeria, or do anything with Nigeria because of Nigerian interest; it is because of their own national interest. The aid given by any foreign power to the Ibadan University is not because of Nigeria's national interest, it is because of the national interest of the donor nation. I just take that as an example. Now apply that to every facet of our lives!

In relation to political freedom, you cannot forget the military. And again, I will try to take it from the historical perspective. In 1649, Charles the First, the King of England, was beheaded. The Rump of the Long Parliament and General Cromwell ruled England. In 1660 there was the Restoration of Charles II, and the Cromwellian era ended. In so far as the modern (if modern we can call it, and when I say 'modern', it is in relation to the very ancient period) world is concerned, that was the first taste of military rule. It may well be that in one form or the other it existed in the Greek days, Roman days, the period of the Phoenicians, but in recent centuries that was the first real taste of military rule. That was the first and last military rule in England. But, if you read English history, many British royalists have never forgiven Cromwell. They believe that he has tainted their history, he has tainted their image, for, to them, military rule is anathema, and as somebody said, "The greatest tragedy that can befall a nation is to be ruled by the military". Antonia Fraser in her notable work "Cromwell: Our Chief of Men" has tried to repair Cromwell's image. Then, of course, you also have Napoleon in France and his exploits: the Napoleonic Wars. That is now a matter of history. And of course, you have the colonels in power in Greece.

Mr Chairman, it has been said that it is quite possible to have a military government which will not return to power once it is surrendered to the civilians. How far that is true, I don't know, but I only know one instance in history where that has happened—that of England, that of Cromwell. And the military has never come back again or attempted to come back. But, Mr Chairman, I am not a student of history. I would like anybody to tell me any other place in the world where the military has come to power and has not

either come back, or attempted to come back? Napoleon ruled France and went away but there have been many attempts again by the military to come back to power in France. Well, in Argentina only sometime ago, Dr Campora was elected as President after 15 years of military rule. Dr Campora came to power under the shibboleth: "Campora in Government, Peron in Power!" Indeed, Peron is now *de facto* and *de jure* in power, with his wife as Vice-President! Who knows what is going to happen in 3 or 4 years time? But one thing I know is that there have been instances in history whereby the civilians have overthrown the military. In Sudan, the military Government in 1964 or so was overthrown by the civilians, and the next one is that of Pakistan in 1972 where the military government was overthrown by the civilians and Bhutto came to power. Those are the instances where this type of thing has happened in history.

Let us look at Africa. I did touch it briefly a few minutes ago, but I will now try to touch it in relation to the military. To my mind, the future of black Africa is still in the melting pot. We really don't know where we are going. Certainly I don't and if anybody knows, I will be happy if he can tell me! In the various African states of today, we appear to be a people engaged in a game of soccer without a referee. Everybody seems to be involved. No institution is sacred. The military is in politics, the police are in politics, the civil servants are in politics, the civilians are in politics, the churches are in politics, etc. These are basically true. Therefore, who is the arbiter? I look round and I cannot see any. And that is why I say that right now, black Africa is engaged in a game of soccer in which there is no referee. You know what follows: it is either anarchy or dictatorship and that is almost what we have now. But, Mr Chairman, like politics, the military is not a bad thing at all. I am talking of the military as such. Being a soldier is not a bad thing. It is only bad people (like bad people in politics) who have turned soldiering into a bad thing. And I will quote for you what Herodotus said of the Persians in his book called *History*. He said, and I quote, talking of the Persians: *Their sons are carefully instructed from their fifth to their twelfth years in doing three things alone, to write, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth.* From the age of five to twelve, three things, to write, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth; and these things are part

of the military virtues. In the olden days, other military virtues were *bravery, discipline, obedience, poverty, fidelity and patriotism*. Well, whether these are present in the military in Africa, it is for you to say; I don't know myself. And, as I have said earlier on, I am not relating it to Nigeria, I am relating it to the world context and you will see that in my analysis I have been trying to deal with the world, and in respect of the military, I am also dealing with the world. The military gets to power by the use of force or threat of the use of force. It remains in power by the use of force, or the threat of the use of force. It continues in power by the use of force or the threat of the use of force. It derives its authority not from the consent of the people, but from the barrel of a gun. And that is why, to start with, a coup is treason, but when it is successful, they say, "Oh yes, it is a successful revolution". When it fails, it is treason. You can relate that to the state of the military, whether in Argentina or in Egypt, in China or in Mali. Mr Chairman, when you have a *dictatorial government*, what the public gives it is obedience and not dedication. Obedience in the sense that, "Well, I don't want to go to prison, I don't want to be detained. Well, I must eat, I must have shelter, one day God will deliver me. Therefore, in return for that I give my obedience, but no dedication". If you have dedication, there will be what is called *total commitment*. Total commitment and dedication go together.

It must be conceded that some military rulers did come to power under inevitable circumstances not really of their own creation. Some have proved very benevolent in office, fostered national unity and hastened national progress and development, the illegitimacy of their origin notwithstanding.

Mr Chairman, political freedom is not under any system anything absolute. There must be some exception for the good of the majority, even under the best form of government. Maybe a piece of land is required for a public purpose; the government will have to acquire it compulsorily. Maybe somebody commits a crime; he has to be tried and sent to prison for the good of others.

Before I finish, I want to refer to the mood of the British people at the height of their empire. The national mood was expressed—and this has a lot to do with political freedom—by two arch-writers. One arch-musician and one arch-writer. The arch-musician was Edward Elgar—maybe you

have heard his name before—and it was he who put into song what is called “The Land of Hope and Glory”. The original poem was written by Christopher Benson, but it was put into song by Edward Elgar. The other one was the famous poet, you probably know him, Rudyard Kipling, who, in his *Recessional*, wrote *The God of Our Father*. These two, the poem and also the song, were in praise of the British Empire, and I want to quote it for you, *The Land of Hope and Glory*, part of it, as written by Edward Elgar:

Land of hope and glory,
Mother of the free;
How shall we explore thee,
Who are born of thee.
Wider still and wider
Shall thy sun be set.
God who made thee mighty.
Make thee mightier yet.

I take the first sentence: *Land of hope and glory, Mother of the free* Britain is the land of hope and glory; but the ruler of those who have lost their freedom under imperialism. Paradoxically, the poet sought the help of God to enslave still more people on earth.

To my mind, for a healthy growth of genuine political freedom in the new nations of the world, the following minimum fundamental norms must be preserved:

First, the rule of the majority must be accepted by the minority.

Second, the majority must accept the right of the minority to dissent.

Third, the military should not be in politics and politics should not be in the military.

Fourth, everyone must recognise and accept the necessity for a fearless, independent and incorruptible judiciary whose decisions must always be respected.

Fifth, freedom of the press must be sincerely and genuinely preserved.

"The Trust given by Allah to man is the trust of free choice and accountability. It is a moral responsibility, which is the human sense of answerableness for all acts of thought and conduct. Thus, its first and foremost prerequisite is freedom of choice, to exercise which is the real function of a human being as a moral agent."

The Islamic View of Freedom

A. R. I. DOI

When a man diminishes himself (by making wrong choices in the matter of faith and action), he is really nothing but a handful of dust. But when he elevates himself (spiritually through good faith and action), he becomes so great that both this world and the next are not enough to contain him in them.—‘Allāmā Muḥammad Iqbāl¹

The whole universe is a manifestation of God's will in which man's place is the highest. *Man*, therefore, is the central theme of the Qur'ān, the holy book of Muslims. It is man whom it seeks to guide. It discusses aspects of his life, his success and failure in the past and their causes, and then gives him an invitation to pursue the right way. This is the aim and object of the Quran, 'the Book Manifest' (*Kitāb-al-Mubīn*). The Quran, along with the *Hadīth* and the *Sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad, is the primary source of Islamic theology.

One of the most familiar themes of the Divine Lordship, in Islamic theology, is that which relates to human destiny in time and history. According to the Quran, the Lord of the Universe, its Creator, Master and Sovereign, created man and bestowed upon him the faculties of learning, speaking, understanding, and discerning right from wrong and good from evil. He granted him freedom of choice, freedom

¹ 'Allāma Dr Muhammad Iqbāl, a well-known poet-philosopher of Islam, (d. 1938 A.D.) expressed this idea concerning a man's freedom in the following Urdu couplet:

*Ghate to sirf ek musht-i-khāk haiṛinsān;
Barhe to wusati kaunam me samāna sake.*

of will, and freedom of action, and gave him authority to acquire and make use of the things around him. In short, He granted him a kind of autonomy, and appointed him as His *Khalifa*¹ (vice-regent) on the Earth and instructed him to live in accordance with His guidance:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels, 'I will create a viceregent on earth'. They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy name?" He said: "I know what ye know not".²

'Allāma Yūsuf 'Alī has beautifully explained this verse.³ It would seem that the angels, though holy and pure, and endowed with power from God, represented only one side of creation; we may imagine them without passion or emotion. If a man was to be endowed with emotions, those emotions could lead him to the highest or drag him to the lowest depths. The power of will or the exercising of choice would have to go with them, in order that man might steer his own bark. This power of will when used aright gave man, to some extent, a mastery over his own fortunes and over nature, thus bringing him nearer to the God-like nature, which has supreme mastery and will. The angels had no independent wills of their own; their perfection in other ways reflected God's perfection but could not raise them to the dignity of vice-regency (*Khilafa*). The perfect vice-regent, therefore, is he who has *the power of initiative* himself, but whose independent action always reflects perfectly the will of his Principal. The angels in their one-sidedness saw only the mischief consequent on the misuse of the emotional nature by man; perhaps they, being without emotions, also did not understand the whole of God's nature, which gives and asks for love. In humility and true devotion to God, they remonstrated. We must not imagine the least tinge of jealousy, as they were without emotion. This mystery of love being above them, they are told: "I know what ye know not".⁴

¹ Qur'ān, ch. 2:30.

² *ibid.*

³ A. Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Beirut 1968), p. 24.

⁴ Qur'ān ch. 2:30.

Man's Freedom and his Responsibilities: The Trust (Amanat) from God

At the time when the Lord of the Universe appointed man as His vice-regent, He gave him such bounties that he could not even count them. As a matter of fact, the universe is really to serve man.

And if you were to count the gifts of God, you would not be able to number them. Surely God is forgiving, compassionate.¹

And he has made the night and the day subject to an order for your use, so also the sun and the moon. And the stars are subject to an order by His command. In these there are signs for those who are able to understand.² Do you not consider that God has made all that is in the heavenly bodies and all that is in this earth subject to an order (or law) for your use, and He has given you life full of blessings that are apparent and that are hidden?³

Everything that Allāh created is for the service of man. He has put a use in everything on this earth for him.⁴ Even the heavenly bodies are of some use to him in every moment of their existence. The choice is now up to man as to how he is going to dispose of these free services of all created things. Is he going to say (and he is given the choice) that these things belong to him and have not been given to him? This is what Fir'aun (Pharaoh) did and set himself up as god. God has given man the gift of knowledge. What is he going to do with it? God has given him health. How is he going to make use of it? He is also given the gift of making beautiful things and doing beautiful deeds. What is he going to do with these gifts? Is he going to be proud? Above all these, God has given man the gift of becoming conscious of His Own Being. Is man going to become conscious of God or is he going to deny him? The choice lies with man.

God intended a very high destiny for man, and placed him in his uncorrupted state even above the angels, but in his corruption he made himself even lower than the beasts.

¹ *ibid.*, ch. 16:18.

² *ibid.*, ch. 16:12.

³ *ibid.*, ch. 31:20.

⁴ *ibid.*, ch. 2:29; 31:20.

What is it that makes man potentially so high and noble? The differentiating quality which God gave man was that God 'breathed something of His own spirit into him'.¹ This meant that man was given a choice of good and evil, and that he was made capable of forbearance, love and mercy; thus he is a microcosm of that great Macrocosm.

That man should possess some of the God-like attributes (in however small a degree), forbearance, love and mercy, brought him nearer to God than was possible for any other creature of God. This was part of God's will and plan, but little did man realize then what a tremendous task he was undertaking or question himself as to whether he would be equal to it.

Verily we offered a present of the Trust (*Amānat*) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and shrank therefrom. And man carried it.²

The Trust mentioned in this passage of the Qu'rān is obviously the trust of free choice and accountability. It is a moral responsibility, which is the human sense of answerableness for all acts of thought and conduct. Thus, its first and foremost prerequisite is freedom of choice, to exercise which is the real function of a human being as a moral agent.

The Trust is something given to a person, over which he has the power of disposition. He is expected to use it as directed or expected, but he has the power to use it otherwise. There is no trust if the trustee has no power, and the trust implies that the giver of the trust believes and expects that the trustee will use it according to the wish of the creator of the trust, and not otherwise.

The heavens, the earth and the mountains, i.e., the other creatures of God besides man, refused to undertake the Trust or responsibility, and may be imagined as happy without a choice of good or evil being given through their will. Man was too audacious and ignorant to realise this, and the result has been that man as a race has been disrupted; the evil ones have betrayed the Trust and brought punishment on

¹ Qu'rān, ch. 32:9.

² *ibid.*, ch. 33:72.

themselves, though the good have been able to rise far above the rest of creation to be the *Muqarrabin*,¹ the nearest ones to God or *Auliya'-Allah*, the Friends of God.

Read these what thine own deeds have written,
Today thyself by thyself shall be judged.²

The doctrine of personal responsibility is insisted on further in another *Sūrah* of the Qur'ān, and the basis of ethics is shown to be our own good or evil as furthering or obstructing our highest development:

Who receiveth guidance, receives it for his own benefit;
who goeth astray doth so to his own loss; no bearer of
burdens can bear the burden of another.³

The doctrine of vicarious atonement is condemned in Islam. Salvation for the wicked cannot be attained by the punishment of the innocent. One man cannot bear the burden of another: that would be unjust. Every man must bear his own personal responsibility. There are a number of Qur'ānic verses in which human responsibility and the freedom of human will are laid down in emphatic terms:

And whosoever gets to himself a sin, gets it solely on his
own responsibility.⁴

And let alone those who make a sport and a mockery
of their religion, and whom this present world has
deluded, and thereby bring to remembrance that any soul
perished for what it has got to itself.⁵

When they commit a deed of shame they say: we have
found that our father did so, and God obliges us to do
it; say thou: surely, God requires not shameful doing.⁶
They did injustice to themselves.⁷

Yonder will every soul experience that which it has
bargained for.⁸

So then, whosoever goes astray, he himself bears the
responsibility of wandering.⁹

¹ Qur'ān, ch. 56:88.

² *ibid.*, ch. 17:14.

³ *ibid.*, ch. 17:15.

⁴ *ibid.*, ch. 4:111.

⁵ *ibid.*, ch. 6:70.

⁶ *ibid.*, ch. 7:28.

⁷ *ibid.*, ch. 9:70.

⁸ *ibid.*, ch. 10:30.

⁹ *ibid.*, ch. 10:108.

Man and His Knowledge

We have already seen that God has preferred man above the rest of His creation. He has imparted knowledge to man which He did not even give to angels. What can this knowledge be? It is self-consciousness. It is a gift from God, the Creator. The Qur'anic description runs as follows:

And God taught Adam all the names of all things (quality of things) and then presented them to the angels and said: Let Me know the names (qualities) of these if you speak the truth.

They replied: 'Glory to Thee! We have no knowledge except what Thou Hast taught us. Thou art surely All-knowing, All-Wise.

He (God) said: 'O Adam, Let these (angels) know what are their qualities.

So when he (Adam) had informed them about their names (qualities or laws), God said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?'¹

The words 'names of all things' mean inner nature and qualities of things, according to the commentator of the Quran, and 'things' also include feelings. The particular qualities or feelings which were outside the nature of angels were put by God into the nature of man. Man was able to understand love and thus plan and initiate, as becomes the high office and status of the *Khalifa* of Allah (vice-regent of God). The angels acknowledged this. Man thus has a share of divine knowledge from God and has many qualities which are latent or which he may wish to suppress or conceal, to his own detriment.

The word 'knowledge' occurs at least eighty times in the Qu'ran and its derivatives about eight hundred times. The other attributes of mind such as 'understanding', 'thinking', 'judging', 'collocating', 'reasoning', etc. and their derivatives are also numerous. This shows the importance that the Qur'an gives to the knowledge of man. Since God has infused in man's heart the knowledge of things and their qualities and properties, he has been charged with great responsibilities.

¹ Qur'ān, ch. 2:31-33.

Man's Freedom of Action and the Grace of God

Man, in spite of all his greatness, still is sometime *Ẓalūm* and *Jahūl*,¹ i.e., unjust and ignorant. In his ignorance and haste he sometimes mistakes evil for good, and desires what he should not have. The wise and instructed soul has patience and does not put his own desires above the wisdom of God. He receives with contentment the favours of God, and prays to be rightly guided in his desires and petitions (*Du'ā*). In such cases, God's Grace comes to his assistance. Where man does his best, he wins through by God's Grace, even though man's *best* is but a poor *good*. Similarly, those who remain firm and exercise properly the freedom of option given them, choosing forbearance, love, and mercy, will receive the aid of God's Grace. Their faults and weaknesses will be cured and they will be worthy of their exalted destiny, for God is Oft-Returning and Most Merciful.²

Through His Grace, God's Mercy gives every chance to the wicked to repent. When wickedness gets so rampant that punishment becomes inevitable, even then God's Mercy and Justice act together. Those who are gifted from God—it may be with wealth or position, or it may be with talents and opportunities—are expected to understand their responsibilities. They are also given a definite order and warning. If they still freely transgress, there is no further room for argument. They cannot plead that they were ignorant. The command of the Lord is proved against them, and its application is called for beyond doubt. It is only then that their punishment is completed.

God's Grace is not something that one earns. It may be purely an undeserved favour which may descend on a seemingly undeserving person. In this case God alone knows His secret and we cannot probe God's Mind.

"*Do not be disappointed from the Mercy of Allah*",³ is the Quranic gospel of hope. In the evolution of Islamic Umma in Medina, and as the Islamic nation grew in numbers, Allah's Mercy was stressed again and again. That Allah is *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* is the repeated teaching of the Qu'rān. After the creedal statement of Islam, the most frequently

¹ Qur'ān, ch. 33:72.

² *ibid.*, ch. 33:73.

³ *ibid.*, ch. 39:53.

used dictum in the Muslim world is *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* which is spoken at the beginning of every work that a Muslim does and also occurs at the beginning of 114 Surahs of the Qu'rān. It contains these attributes of hope and mercy. Allah is *Raḥmān*, the loose translation of which would be "the Beneficent" since there is no other English word that can better convey the idea of *Raḥmān*. It means that Allah is Merciful to all believers as well as non-believers—even to those who abuse Him day and night. It is in other words a great favour from Allah which is, so to say, a favour undeserved, judging by their faith and action.

God's plan is to use the human will to co-operate in understanding Him and His relations to us.

"If it had been God's plan, they should have not taken false gods".¹

This Qu'rānic verse is an answer to an objector who might say: "If He is All-Powerful, why does sin or evil exist in the world? Can He not destroy it"? He certainly can, but His plan is different. If it had been God's plan or will not to grant the limited free-will that He has granted to man, His omnipotence could have made all mankind alike: all would then have had faith, but that faith would have reflected no merit on them. In the actual world as it is, man has been endowed with various faculties and capacities, so that he should strive and explore, and bring himself into harmony with God's will. Hence faith becomes a moral achievement, and to resist faith becomes a sin. As a complementary proposition, men of faith must not be impatient or angry if they have to contend against unfaith, and most important of all, they must guard against the temptation of forcing faith, i.e., imposing it on others by physical compulsion, or any other form of compulsion such as social pressure or inducement, held out by wealth or position, or other adventitious advantages. Forced faith is no faith. They should strive spiritually and let God's plan work as He wills.

Self-discipline is not an Encroachment on Man's Freedom

Forgiveness (*Maghfirah*) can only be achieved through the grace of Allah, yet it would be a mere mockery to ask for forgiveness without accepting and practising forgiveness and

¹ Qur'ān, ch. 6:107.

goodness, in one's life. This requires unrelenting self-discipline in the service of Allah. Self-discipline in this wise is not to be misconstrued as lack of human freedom, but it is one's ability to resist those choices which are attractive but contrary to the accepted standards of religion. It also includes the ability to implement what one ought to do against what one can do.

Thus it is self-discipline which gives shape to human maturity. Like a jug of water when it is spilled carelessly on the floor, it splashes in every direction shapelessly. But the same water, if it is put in a beautiful bottle, is given shape. Similarly, the carelessness of the worldly was a source of continual bewilderment to the Prophet Muhammad, to all earlier prophets of Islam as to most religious minds. The Prophet of Allah came to guide such careless people unto the right path, but some people chose for themselves the vanities of this world, as the Qur'ān says:

They chose for (themselves) the vanities of this world saying (as excuse): "(Everything) will be forgiven us". (Even so), if similar vanities came their way, they would (again) seize them.¹

The Prophet Muhammad referred to self-discipline as the *Jihād al-Akbar*, that is, the *Greatest Jihād*. Once he was returning to Medina from a battle of defence against the Quaraishites along with his companions (*sahāba*). He said, "We are returning from a smaller *Jihād* to the Greatest *Jihād*". Medina, where they were going, was a peaceful place. There were no enemies and no war. The Messenger of Allāh (*Rasūl-Allāh*) really meant the *Jihād* against one's carnal desires as the greatest *Jihād*. The prophets (*Anbyā*) and messengers (*Mursalūn* of Allāh were sent to mankind as a divine gift through Allah's grace to explain their mission, but their credentials were doubted.

The (people) said: Ye are only men like ourselves, and (Allāh) Most Gracious sends no sort of revelation: Ye do nothing but lie.²

These divine messengers explained their mission and the role that they were going to play under the direction of Allah.

¹ Qur'ān, ch. 7, verse 169.

² Qur'ān, ch. 36, verse 15; cf. Acts 14:15, where Paul and Barnabas say, in the city of Lystra near the modern Konia: "We are men with like passions with you, and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities . . ."

They were not going to use force, but their method of introducing reforms was by persuading people to refrain from evil deeds. They said:

And our duty is only to proclaim the clear message.¹

The brilliant commentator of the Quran, 'Abdullah Yusuf Ali, writes while explaining this verse in his commentary:

Then they (the prophets) proceed to explain what their mission is. It is not to force them but to convince them. It is to proclaim openly and clearly God's will, which they (the people) were breaking—to denounce their sins and to show them the better path. If they were obstinate, it was their own loss. If they were rebellious against God, the punishment (which they deserved) rested with God.²

The Quranic view on this is expressed clearly in the following verse:

He who follows the guidance of the Apostle, follows the guidance of God: But if any turn away, we have not sent thee to watch over their evil deeds.³

In other words, all that the apostle did was to preach, guide, instruct, and show the Way—not drive people to good or to detect all that was evil. That is not Allah's plan, which trains and disciplines the human will. The Apostle's duty then is to convey the Message of God, in all the ways of persuasion that are open to him. If men perversely turn away, they are not disobeying him but they are disobeying God. Similarly those who follow the guidance are not obliging the Messenger: they are merely fulfilling their own responsibility. The Quran further stresses the idea of freedom in the words of Allah, which teach the Prophet to declare:

If they charge thee (Prophet) with falsehood, say (Prophet): "My work to me, and yours to you! Ye are *free* from responsibility for what I do, and I am free from responsibility for what ye do."⁴

¹ Qur'ān, ch. 36, verse 17.

² A. Yusuf 'Ali: *The Holy Qur'ān*, Beirut 1968, p. 1173.

³ Qur'ān, ch. 6, verse 80.

⁴ Qur'ān, ch. 10, verse 41

Man's Freedom and the Notion of Original Sin

Islam does not believe in the doctrine of original sin. It is not Adam's sin that a child inherits and manifests at birth. Every child that is born is sinless and the sins of the fathers are also not visited upon the children. It is only when the child grows in age, that he becomes aware of his surroundings and then turns towards good or evil through the handiwork and temptations of Satan, "the open enemy of man".¹ In Christianity, it is the sin that dwells within one's self that drives one to error and evil. "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me".²

Islam denies emphatically the concept of original sin and hereditary depravity. Every child was born pure and true; every departure in after-life from the path of truth and rectitude is due to imperfect education. Prophet Muhammad's saying makes it more clear: "Every man is born religiously constituted; it is his parents who make him afterwards a Jew, Christian, or a Sabaeen, like as ye take up the beast at its birth—do ye find upon it any mutilation, until ye yourselves mutilate it"? In other words good or evil is not created in man at birth. Infants have no positive moral character. Of those who die in early life God best knows what would have been their conduct if they had lived to maturity. "Every human being", it is related in the Hadith of the Prophet,³ "has two inclinations—one prompting him to good and impelling him thereto, and the other prompting him to evil and thereto impelling him; but the assistance of God is nigh, and he who asks the help of God in contending with the evil promptings of his own hearts obtains it".

Discussions of the Theologians on Freedom

The 'Ulamā' of integrity who had taken to the vocation of knowledge and education began to examine various questions concerning Islamic theology. One such man was the celebrated Hasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 A. H.) who had a famous school in Basrah to which students came from different parts of the Muslim world. In the words of Shaikh Muḥammad

¹ *ibid.*, ch. 2; 168; 208.

² Romans 7: 18–20.

³ Reported by Abū Sā'id al-Khudrī: Bukhārī.

Abduh, "People of all religious persuasions had come into Islam without knowing it inwardly but carrying with them into it their existing notions, seeking some kind of mediating compromise between the old and the Islamic. Every opinion-monger took his stand upon the liberty of thought the Quran enjoined".¹ Some such scholars had come to Shaikh al-Basri's school.

Shaikh Hasan al-Basri and other early Muslim leaders of thought were of the view that man truly has choice in the deeds which proceed from his knowledge and will. They opposed the school of determination (*Jabr*), which held that a man in his volitional activity is like the branches of a tree swaying necessarily.² Later, an extremist philosophical sect appeared which was named the Qadarites. One day 'Atā ibn Yassar and Mabad al-Juhānī (d. 80 A.H.) came to Hasan al-Basri and said: "O Abu Said, those kings shed blood of the Muslims, and do grievous things and say their works are by the decree of God". Hasan al-Basri replied categorically: "The enemies of God lie".

These Qadarites denied that God pre-destined the actions of men. Wasil bin Ata (d. 131 A.H.) believed that death and life, sickness, health, and external vicissitudes came by God's *Qadar* (power) but it was unthinkable that man should be punished for actions not in his control.³ Later, Abu Hudhayl Muhammad al-Allaf (d. circa 226 A.H.) put forward his peculiar position concerning one's *Qadar* in one's action. With regard to this world, he was a *Qadarite*: but in the next world, both in heaven and in hell, he thought that all changes were by divine necessity. Otherwise, that is, if men were free, there would be obligation to observe law (*taklif*); but there was no such obligation in the other world. Thus, whatever happened there, happened by God's decree.⁴

His contemporary Al-Nazzām (d. 231 A.H.) who was very much influenced by Greek philosophers, mingled the Mutazalite doctrines with the teachings of the Greek philosophers. His extremist view was that God could do nothing

¹ Muhammad 'Abduh, *Risālat al-Tauhīd* Tr. by Ishāq Musaad and Kenneth Cragg (London 1966), p. 34.

² *ibid.*

³ D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory* (Lahore 1960), p. 135.

⁴ cf. Macdonald, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

to a creature, either in this world or in the next, that was not for the creature's good and in accordance with strict justice. It was not only that God *would* not do it; He had not the power to do anything evil. Because of his extremist views on the Qadarite as well as other aspects of Islamic theology, contemporary and later Muslim scholars called him 'one of the satans of the Qadarites'.

Al-Ashari (d. 320 A.H.), was the most famous of the authors of *Kalam* (scholastic theology). He set the matter down in his refutation of the *Qadariyya* and the *Mutazila*. He explained the doctrine of *Kasb*, that is *acquisition*, which speaks of man 'acquiring' his actions. Muslim theologians in general did not and do not uphold a doctrine approaching fatalism, although many common people without any insight into the Quran or the Hadith have been practical fatalists. *Min-Allāh* that is, 'it comes from Allah', has been common explanation of calamities, both natural and moral. The doctrine of *Kasb* or acquisition upholds human responsibility, asserting God's power while at the same time assuring man of God's justice. The Quran speaks of *Kasb* many times.¹ It may be interpreted to mean "acquire, seek or attain good or evil".² The Asharite view, in the words of al-Jurjani, is that the action of a creature is created, originated, produced by Allah but it is 'acquired' (*Maksūb*) by the creature, by which is meant its being brought into connection with his power and will without there resulting any effect from him in it or any introduction to its existence, and that he is a locus (*maḥall*) for it.³ In other words, the Asharite explanation of *Kasb* refers to our consciousness of freedom to choose and this consciousness is God's creation in the minds of men. The Maturidite school of theology explained⁴ human knowledge as being of two kinds: 1. Essential (*Darūrī*) and 2. Acquired (*Iktisābī*). In the acquisition of *Iktisābī* knowledge, there are three kinds of means or causes (*asbāb*):

1. The healthy senses
2. Reliable narrative
3. Rational consideration

¹ Qur'ān, ch. 2: 86, 134, 141, 225, 281; 286; 3:25, 161; 6:70, 157; 13:33; 14:51; 10:27; 30:41; 40:17; 42:30; 45:22; 74:38.

² C. C. Torrey, *The Commercial and Theological Terms in the Qur'ān* (London 1892), p. 27.

³ Al-Jurjānī on *Al-Mawāqif* of al-Ījī, Bulaq 1266, p. 515.

⁴ Al-Taftāzānī on the *Aqā'id* of al-Nasafī, p. 39.

Rational consideration is of two kinds:

1. Immediate intuition (*badīha*)
2. Deduction (*Istidlāl*)

Conclusion

God, out of His own wisdom, has made man's actions depend on his own initiative, and He has also put obstacles in the race which man has to run. But He has pointed the way to get over those obstacles and He also promises help as long as man is willing to be helped. Why God has done what He has done is beyond our knowledge. To ask that question is to assert our superiority over Him and may lead to our denial of Him. He may tell us all about it when we have run the race, have had our thousands of falls and yet not denied Him; but before the race is finished the asking of this question in a defiant spirit is rebellion against God.

Man has the freedom; let each one do according to his light of knowledge and will. The question is between each individual and his soul.

It is unfortunate that there prevails a common view that Muslims are traditionally 'fatalistic'. It is true that there appeared in Islam a group of people called the Jabarites, as we have seen before, who held a strict doctrine of predestination. They also quoted the Quranic passages and interpreted them to suit their purpose. It was an extremist group of thinkers who rendered man merely a helpless creature who was shackled and put into prison and who said that everything was destined concerning him. They thus tried to make God a participator in every sin they committed and called God a tyrant for punishing them for their sin. On the other extreme were the 'free thinkers' and 'libertarians' like Al-Nazzam who not only made man an absolute author of his actions but also imposed necessity on God so that God could not do anything either in this world or the next which was not good for the creatures and in accordance with strict justice, and thus God had no power to do anything evil. This meant, evidently, that God's personality was made to vanish behind an absolute law of right. Some of the champions of *absolute liberty* (*Tafwīd*) did not mean just freedom of human will, but affirm such a principle as would destroy all the foundation of morality, and give to all human beings absolute licence in the indulgence of their animal propensities. If

each individual is given absolute discretion to choose what is right or wrong, no sanction, no law can have any force. Man has no capacity of turning evil into good, or sin into virtue. The Asharite and the Maturidite scholars presented the intermediate orthodox Islamic point of view on the position of man's freedom. Their point of view is more logical. Allah is just (*Adl*); the justice (*Adl*) of Allah requires man's freedom, and man has in him the consciousness of his freedom. A man will be rewarded or punished according to his free choice of actions (*afal al-Ikhtiyariyya*).¹ Man 'acquires' for himself the action according to his consciousness of free will. The Quranic evidence is quite clear in this regard:

"God does not change a peoples' condition until they change their own's heart's thoughts."²

These savants supported the moderate Islam view of human freedom as the middle path between the two extremes (*amr bayn al amrain*). Man is not the absolute master of his actions nor is he bound by fixed immutable decrees. Our actions, they held, depend partly on our own free-will and partly on causes outside us. We are free to wish and to act in a particular manner; but our will is always restrained by exterior causes. These causes spring from the general laws of nature; God alone knows their sequences. S'ad al-Din al-Taftāzānī said in his commentary on the *Articles*: "It is not possible to tender this free choice by any expression, but the creature finds a difference between the movement of his hand when he moves it himself and when the wind moves it against his will".

Man's true freedom is the realisation or emergence of his true self. It still involves distinguishing the notion of freedom from that of his absolute discretion and choice. In accordance with this definition of freedom, one's freedom can easily be infringed by a tyrant. According to a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad, a Muslim should exert and launch a *Jihad* of reform against such a ruler. Justice is the right of every individual and he is free to demand it. The Prophet says: "The best *Jihad* is to speak up the truth in the face of a tyrannical ruler".³

¹ Al-Nasafī, *'Aqā'id*: edited with commentary of Al-Taftāzānī, Cairo 1321, p. 97.

² Qur'ān, ch. 13:12.

³ Hadith.

Although one's freedom can be infringed by the tyranny of a ruler, it is not infringed by an earthquake, hurricane, famine, crop-failure, disease, death or anything beyond human control. These are the mysteries of God and we are not capable of reading God's mind nor of questioning him about His actions. According to Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, 'injustice can be predicated only of one who deals wrongly with things he does not own. This cannot be said of God'.

The Caliph 'Ali bin Abu Talib's words of wisdom gives the balanced Islamic belief on man's freedom. He was once asked to explain the meaning of *Qada* (predestination) and *Qadar* (Power). He said: "The first (i.e., *Qada*) means obedience to the commandments of God and avoidance of sin; the latter (i.e., *Qadar*), the ability to live a holy life, and to do that which brings one nearer to God and to shun that which throws him away from his perfection...; say not that man is compelled, for that is attribution of tyranny to God; nor say that man has absolute discretion—rather that we are furthered by His help and grace in our endeavours to act righteously, and we transgress because of our neglect (of his commandments)".¹

Freedom for a Muslim is to free himself to lead a good moral life, follow the guidelines of the Prophet Muhammad and all the great teachers. It is to teach and practice what the Quran calls *Amr bil ma'rūf* (virtuous commands) and refrain from *Munkar* (the bad practices). The famous Muslim scholar and theologian Imam Abu Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 A.D.) called it 'Freedom from Error' (*Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*),² submitting one's self to Allah by fulfilling one's obligation to Allah (*Huqūq Allāh*) and one's responsibilities to the people of Allah (*Huqūq al-'Ibād*), which is the true meaning of the word Islam.

¹ *Ihtijāj al-Tabrasi*, a collection of traditions by Shaikh al-Tabrasi p. 236. It is quoted by Ameer Ali in *The Spirit of Islam* (University Paperbacks: London 1967), pp. 409-450.

² This is the name of his book in which he has shown how he freed himself of erroneous beliefs and practices.

"St Paul . . . was able to say, "All things are lawful for me". Later, St Augustine understood this freedom in Christ so well that he could counsel his fellow Christians to love God and then do as they pleased. To know that God accepts us as we are is to be free indeed."

The Christian View of Freedom

G. K. FALUSI

ANOTHER appropriate or alternative title for this paper could be, "The Biblical View of Freedom". If the two titles are identical, then, as in almost all Biblical or theological conceptions, we have to go first and foremost to the Old Testament for the background of the Christian view of Freedom.

Before we do this, however, it is necessary to define what we mean by Freedom. Freedom (*eleutheria* in Greek) or liberty (*libertas* in Latin) is primarily the state of those who are not slaves; theologically, and more fundamentally, it is the quality of personal and social life, here and hereafter, which is the given possession of those whom Christ has set free from human and sinful bondage.

Freedom in the Old Testament

Generally, freedom in the Old Testament is almost exclusively the condition of those set free from slavery, or of those exempt from forced labour. But it is significant that the more humane treatment of slaves by the Hebrews was a direct consequence of their religion. So by and by we have the religious idea of freedom coming into the picture. In fact, in Isaiah 61:1 'freedom' or 'liberty' is a metaphor of what God was about to effect in history in releasing his people from Babylon. "The Lord has anointed me . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound". Jesus took the metaphor to its final stage when, preaching at Nazareth, he used it to indicate the deliverance wrought by his own coming (Luke 4: 16-21). This will be discussed fully when we come to the New Testament idea of freedom.

Before we go further in our investigation, it is appropriate to note the original relationship between God and man before sin came in. Here Genesis 1:26-28 comes to our mind. The author states that God said, "Let us make man in our image...; in the image of God he created him..." The point here is that there has now come into being a person, a being with intelligence, a rational being, capable of being addressed and of responding, endowed with the power of apprehension as well as capacity for communication and communion—and therefore a free man.

When we read chapter three of Genesis, however, we find a different situation. Genesis 3 implies a perfect state and perhaps perfect freedom. Then at a point in time man rebelled against the authority of his maker and brought harm not only upon himself but also upon those who followed after him. In short, what we have here is that there was that unhappy moment when man preferred to be guided by his own will rather than the will of his creator. This was the moment of the fall. The fall is a reversal of the relational condition of the human life. Man used his freedom only to become like God, refusing to accept his status as a creature dependent upon God, a dependence in which his true freedom is to be discovered. He attempted to put himself on equal footing with God.

What is the consequence of all this? There appears disharmony where once there was only harmony. Man no longer lives in Paradise. Not only this, he also destroys the most precious thing he has—the free and natural communion that exists between himself and God. His assertion of independence, his assertion of freedom, is actually his separation from the source of all life and all blessing. The power, the freedom given to him to rule (Gen. 1:28) thus becomes the occasion for him to lust for more power and freedom, except that they are of the wrong type.

The man blames the woman, the woman blames the serpent. Indeed, we could almost hear Adam saying, "God, you are partly responsible. After all you gave me the woman". This assumption is strengthened by Adam's reply to God's question. You remember God asked him, "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" To which Adam replied: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate". The implication

of Adam's statement is that if God had not given him the woman, the incident would have been avoided. We witness here, then, a shifting of responsibility.

Thus Adam blames God for taking the law into his own, Adam's hands, for substituting his own idea of freedom, freedom to do as he pleased, for God's given freedom. This is what we have in the story of Adam and Eve and the serpent.

In Christian teaching this story has been known as the "fall" of man. That is, man has "fallen" from the grace of God in the sense that he now lives in sin and under the judgement of God. His rebellion against God's lordship has forced God to discipline him by punishment. This does not mean, however, that the "image of God" in man has been destroyed; it is still there (cf. Gen. 9:6). Nor does it mean that man shall know in the future nothing but the punishing judgement of God or that he has lost his freedom for ever. The remainder of the Bible is the story of the loving and merciful acts of God in man's behalf. Yet, it does mean that a deep, basic, and fundamental infection exists in the heart of man and that he is responsible for the loss of his freedom—this is the fact of sin.

There is, however, a final suggestion. It is the call to the kind of moral conflict which promises victory. The serpent may bruise man's heel, but ultimately man is meant to crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). The religion of the Old Testament has in it always a virile optimism. It is not blind to the tragedy of life, but all the while it looks forward to triumph. If this suggestion holds any water, we would say that the realization of this triumph came in the life and work of Jesus: "the Lord . . . has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives . . ." This we shall discuss fully in the section that follows, the New Testament idea of freedom.

The New Testament Idea of Freedom

The New Testament does not define freedom in purely formal terms as the possibility of doing what one wants. Paul, who develops the Christian idea of freedom, does not consider freedom in itself, but only the freedom of faith (and lack of freedom, as fallenness into sin and flesh). He does not find himself "confronted with either the psychological

problem of the freedom of the will or the cosmological problem of determinism or indeterminism as part of a world view".¹

Thus, Paul's theme is not the formal structures but the concrete facts of sin and the flesh and hence freedom from these powers, which is not the Christian's own simply as a man, but is given to him through justification. Freedom must therefore be described by a contrast of the 'once' and the 'now',² by a description of the transition or transportation from servitude to freedom, the process of grace and justification, the act of liberation. Freedom is "strange freedom"³ in Christ.

More concretely, the New Testament uses *eleutheria* for (1) freedom from sin (Rom. 6:18-23; John 8: 31-36), (2) from the Law (Rom. 7: 3f; 8:2; Gal. 2.4; 4: 21-31; 5: 1, 13), and (3) from death (Rom. 6: 21f; 8:21).

Jesus emphasizes the first category, i.e., 'freedom from sin', in the passage of John 8: 31-36. According to John, in this passage, Jesus, the Son of God, is the one who liberates, who frees men from the slavery of sin. John does not speak of slavery to the law like Paul (a theme that will receive our attention later in this paper), but goes directly to a slavery to sin (John 8:34). The Jewish Christians who received the gospel message would, of course, understand that Jesus was speaking of freedom and slavery on a spiritual level, but "the Jews" who are pictured as Jesus' actual audience typically misunderstand and think that he is speaking on a political level.

The nationalistic pride of the Jews found in v. 33 of John 8, "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free'?" resembles the 'empty' boast of Eleazar to the besieged Jews at Masada: "Long ago we determined to be slaves to neither the Romans nor any one else, save God".⁴ But Jesus says that they are not free with the only freedom that concerns him, a freedom from sin. This is the freedom

¹ Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd, 1968), p. 275.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to John I-XII* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 363.

of the true descendant of Abraham, and is a freedom that can come only through the son (v. 36). The Jews misunderstand the meaning of the word 'freedom'; and their misunderstanding sets in motion the discourse in which they are completely exposed. Since the servants of God can be slaves of no man (Lev. 25:42f), freedom was for the Jew a present reality, not a future hope as Jesus' statement would indicate (*eleutheroi*). Josephus also cites the teaching of Judas the Galilean that the Jews can rightly call no man Lord, since God is their ruler and Lord, and regards this inviolable attachment to freedom as the cause of revolt from the authority of Rome.¹

It is not political freedom, however, that is at issue between the Jews and the Christians. The issue is between that freedom of service to God which the Jews claimed because they were the physical descendants of Abraham, and the liberty which belonged to Christians who had passed from sin to righteousness, from slavery to freedom, because they had been born by God by faith in Jesus. (I John 3:9; 5:1 cf. Rom. 6:12-22; 8:1-4). In this context, both for the Jew and for the Christian, political freedom was trivial; and the Jews could rightly say that they were never in bondage to any man, as Cyril of Alexandria well commented: "Joseph was sold to be a bond slave, yet he was free, all radiant in the nobility of his soul".²

There is, however, a freedom—the only true freedom—which the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, did not want to accept, viz., freedom from the tyranny of sin. To this freedom the whole teaching and life of Jesus pointed as His gospel—for the Jews.

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus, as the Christ, the Son of Man, exercises his power on earth to remit sins (Mark 2:17). The word 'remit' (*aphiemi*) in the Greek suggests not only forgiveness, but also freedom from captivity or slavery (Lk. 4:18, cf. Isa. 58:6; 61:1). It is Jesus who could do all this for the Jews. The miracles of healing are therefore signs of that deeper messianic cure or, if you like, freedom, which the Lord expects will be operative in his disciples, or all his followers who stand within the kingdom of God.

¹ Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Francis N. Davey (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 339.

² Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 339.

If Jesus is the one who forgives, who frees men from sin, then he is the truth, he is the liberator. If this is so, why then is the boast, where is the confidence of the Jews in their physical descent from Abraham? (Gen. 17:16, 22:17; Ps. 105:6; Isa. 41:8; Lk. 1:55). But this boast, this confidence, is abruptly undermined by Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:9; Luk. 15: 19-31; Gal. 3:7): "Do not presume to say to yourselves; we have Abraham as our father; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. 3:9).

The popular argument of the Jews was that the righteousness of Abraham was of sufficient merit for the justification of his physical children, so that Justin Martyr concluded from the argument of Trypho that his doctrine meant "the eternal kingdom will be given to those who are of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, even though they be sinners and unbelievers and disobedient to God".¹ Against this confidence, this boast, the New Testament is one long protest which is here sharply formulated by the author of the Fourth Gospel. Freedom was not possessed by the Jews. It had to be created for them and offered to them. "Ye shall be free" (John 8:36). The Jews understand (v.33) quite rightly—"We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free?'"—that such a promise contains a judgment upon them; they are bondmen. And they contest this judgment by referring to their being children of Abraham. Their question shows that they also rightly understand freedom as the freedom which the relationship to God gives to man. But they fail to recognise that freedom can be both present and eschatological gift; they hold that it is the characteristic of the Jew, who already has it as his possession in virtue of his being a child of Abraham.

That is the standpoint of Pharasaic Judaism. Whereas the Zealots based the struggle for political freedom on the principle that the Jew is subject to no man but to God only, for the Rabbinic viewpoint the freedom of the Jew is independent of his political situation; it is based on his being a son of Abraham or son of God, and on his possession of the Torah.

¹ Hoskyns, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

But look again at the statement of v.34 in the Johannine text—"he who commits sin is a bondman"—this is indeed to affirm that the sinner is enslaved exactly to sin, that he has lost himself, and is not able to withdraw to a safe area of inner freedom. Jesus, however, as the liberator, leads him to freedom indeed, not through demanding that he reflect on his originally free self, but through calling him to faith, to faith in him whom God sent to save the lost world. Just as his coming is also an eschatological event, so the freedom which he promises is also an eschatological gift; it is freedom from the world, and that means at the same time freedom from the past, and so the freedom of man from himself. "For the world is indeed man himself, who constitutes it; and the past is his past, his 'whence' from which he comes, and which determines him".¹

Freedom is an eschatological possibility, given by God through his revelation. Its conception, however, presupposes the admission that one is a bondman, a slave to one's own past, to the world and to sin.

Of that the Jews are ignorant when they talk about freedom simply in virtue of the past, i.e., their descent from Abraham. For certainly they would have been right in appealing to being Abraham's children if they had interpreted the significance of this as a promise for the future which yet lay obligations upon them. From their descent from Abraham they should have understood freedom as a divine gift; they misunderstood it, however, as a possession that belonged to them. To look into the past, into history, is right indeed if it is a look at God's deeds which commit to faithfulness, since they always direct a man away from himself to God's future. Whether the adherence of the Jews to their history is genuine faithfulness must prove itself by whether they recognize God's revelation in Jesus, which sets a question mark against them.

For the author of the Fourth Gospel the whole conception and reality of sonship springs from the sonship of Jesus. He is the Son of God who abides in the house of God for ever (12:34; cf. Heb. 3:5-6). All that the Christians are, they are because of His creative activity (cf. Gal. 4:31; 5:1), and only those whom he has liberated are, in any genuine sense of the word, free.

¹ R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*: Translated by Gareth Putman (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 439.

That the reception of genuine freedom presupposes the abandonment of false security is shown in John 8: 37-40, since the discussion of vv. 33f. is continued. The Jews rightly appeal to the fact that they stand in relation to Abraham as his children (v. 37); nevertheless they understand it only in an external fashion and in truth that is not right. For if their relation to Abraham were a genuine one, they would believe in Jesus; instead of that they wish to kill him. Their behaviour, which flows from the supposed certainty of their possession, makes it transparently clear that they are unfaithful to their history, in so far as it is the history that has been guided by God. This divinely directed history, at the beginning of which stands Abraham, would only really be 'their' history if they grasped the meaning or the figure of Abraham which points to the future, the eschatological future. Their history, properly understood, had the meaning of releasing them, of freeing them from their specific past and of directing them to the God-given future—and so if they and we know the truth, who is Jesus himself, the truth will make them and us free.

In the next part of this paper, we need to deal briefly with the Pauline view of freedom—we shall examine this in its three categories. Paul uses *eleutheria* for (1) freedom from sin—which we presume is the development of Jesus' view as we saw in John's Gospel (Rom. 6: 18-23; cf. John 8: 31-36). (2) freedom from the Law (Rom. 7: 3f.; 8:2; Gal. 2: 4, 21-31; 5:1, 13) and (3) freedom from death (Rom. 6: 20-21).

I. Freedom from sin (and walking in the Spirit)

Paul illustrates our freedom from sin by means of baptism. The liberated are the baptised. This may be seen in Rom. 6:17f., which is set in the context of the baptismal discussion of. 6: 1f. Bondage under sin is past through "obedience from the heart", i.e., through the fulfilled act of obedience to a formulated doctrine to which one is committed. Liberation from the power of sin thus takes place in an act of obedience to the baptismal teaching which has mastered us. It is by no means difficult to suppose that to be free indicates the fulfilment of baptism, which accomplishes release from sin in an act of obedience to the formulated Gospel. The sacramental

fulfilment of baptism in those who are linked with the church by the baptismal symbol mediates primarily the freedom which is given us in the act of Jesus Christ. On the basis of the act of baptism in which the spirit of the love of Jesus Christ is made ours, the claim of this liberating love is made on man. And in view of the incursion of the love of God, which takes place also in the expository form of teaching, man must continually decide for this love which presses in upon him.

But at the same time the freedom to which we are free through baptism is not a "freedom to be offered as a base of operations to the flesh" (Gal. 5: 13 tr.), that is, not a release from all binding norms, from the law of God, but rather a new servitude (Rom. 7:6), the service of the "living God" (I Thess. 1:9) or of Christ (Rom. 14:8; 16:18), an enslavement not to "sin" any longer, but to "righteousness" (Rom. 6 16-18). A paradoxical servitude! For the "Slave of Christ" is, at the same time "a freedman of Christ" (I Cor. 7:22). This is why in Rom. 6, Paul was opposing the purely sacramental understanding of baptism as a means by which one achieves assurance of a future life. He does so by showing that the life confirmed by baptism must prove itself in the present by its freedom from the power of sin, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ" (v. 11).

In this way freedom from sin and justification by faith are linked together because freedom from sin is already realized in the "righteousness of God". The way the believer becomes what he already is consists therefore in the constant appropriation of grace by faith, which also means in concrete 'obedience'; "for sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

Also the believer has been given (in baptism) the gift of the spirit. What that means is just this: He has been given freedom—freedom from the power of sin and death. But at the same time it is a freedom that arises from the very fact that the believer, as "ransomed", no longer "belongs to himself" (Cor. 6:19). He no longer bears the care for himself, for his own life, but lets this care go, yielding himself entirely to the grace of God; he recognizes himself to be the property of God (or of the Lord) and lives for Him:

None of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14: 7f.; cf. 7:4; Gal. 2:19f.; 11 Cor. 5:14f.)

The mightiest expression of freedom is in I Cor. 3: 21-23: "For all things are yours . . ., whether the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours". But the concluding clauses are "and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's".

II. *Freedom from Law*

Paul describes the process in legal terminology, as liberation from the claims of the law (Rom. 8:2ff.; Gal. 4:2ff.). Rom. 7: 1-6 states in what way we are freed from the law: we have died to the law through the body of Christ (7:4). In this way it has lost its jurisdiction over us. Paul describes this process appropriately by the use of the 'once and now' pattern (Rom. 7: 5f.).

Freedom from the law is particularized in two directions: (a) over against the legalism (1) of the Judaizers (Gal.), (2) of the Jews (Rom.); (b) over against the libertinism of the Corinthian enthusiasts (I Cor. 1: 18ff.). The issue between the Corinthian enthusiasts and Galatian nomists is the same in each case; the only difference is the context of the discussion. The Galatians preach 'faith and the law'. Paul retorts, 'through faith alone'. This makes freedom, and the possibility of its fulfilment in obedience, understandable. The Corinthians argue, "All is permissible" (I Cor. 6:12; 10:23). Against this, Paul cannot say, "No, no freedom". He says, "Yes, freedom, but freedom of faith or freedom in the body of Christ, freedom from the powers for the edification of the Church".¹

For Paul, and in that case for the Christian, Christ is the end of the law. 'In him' or 'through him' we have freedom from the law. For freedom he sets us free (Gal. 5:1); to it we were "called" (Gal. 5:8). The Christian Church is the congregation of the free, while Judaism is under bondage to

¹ Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd, 1966), p. 280.

the law, as the Sarah—Hagar allegory (Gal. 4: 21–31) sets forth. The man who once held the position of a slave under the law has been set free, to be no longer a ward; now he has the rights of a son (Gal. 3: 23–41; 7). The “old covenant” and the “ministration of death” and “of condemnation” which “faded away” have been replaced by the “new covenant” and “the ministration of the Spirit” and of “righteousness” which is “permanent” (II Cor. 3: 6–11). That is the reason for Paul’s struggle against the Judaizers in Galatia, and for his exhortation to those freed by Christ: “stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

For the Galatians, this means that they may not lapse into the position that they formerly occupied (Gal. 4:3). They cannot return to bondage, because otherwise freedom cancels itself out. In metaphorical terms: if they are accepted into sonship, they can no longer behave as slaves (Gal. 4: 3ff.).

Freedom from the Law, therefore, has a dialectical or paradoxical character—“freedom from its demands, and obligation to it none the less”¹—depending upon the sense in which the demand is understood. This freedom can find expression in the formula, “*All things are lawful for me*” (I Cor. 6:12; 10:23), which was evidently a slogan of the gnosticizing Christians in Corinth. Paul approves of it, but when he adds, “but not all things are wholesome . . . but I will not be enslaved by anything” the ambiguity of the formula becomes apparent: it is to be rejected so far as it asserts that man is released from all obligation and that his subjective caprice is given free rein. If this were true, then this principle would have the consequence hinted at in the words, “but I will not be enslaved by anything”.

An urgent question then arises. If the law, though not its demands, is said to be at an end, with what right can this condition be called ‘freedom’ at all? The answer can be given by a demonstration of how we are freed: by the objective act of salvation. This also provides the explanation from what and for what we are freed: from the flesh, for the spirit. Because of this, it is no longer possible to act according to

¹ Bultmann, R. *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), II, p. 341.

the flesh, to allow oneself to be dominated by an alien power (Rom. 8:12). We have no freedom to sin. That would be a contradiction in itself (Gal. 5:13).

III. Freedom from Death

Freedom from Law and sin is also freedom from death, for death is the "wage" and the "fruit" of sin (Rom. 6:23; 7:5, etc.). Without sin there is no death—by which, of course, is meant no eternal death. Death is settled for us because we have died with Christ. The believer, having died with Christ, also shares in his resurrection. The form of imagery in which Paul expresses the view that 'life' has a future beyond the death of the body is that of the Jewish—Christian tradition—the resurrection of the dead. Paul presents this teaching, strange to Hellenistic ears, in I Thessa. 4:13–17, and defends it at length in I Cor. 15.

As Adam brought death upon Adamitic mankind, so Christ brought life for the new mankind; in him it is already present even though it will not actualize itself for the believer until the future (Rom. 5:17, 21). Life is already here; for Christ's resurrection is conceived not just as the first case of rising from the dead, but as the origin of the resurrection life of all believers, which necessarily proceeds from it and hence can be regarded as already present in origin. Also in I Cor. 15: 12–16 the logic of the argument is not that the possibility of any resurrection is proved by one case of resurrection such as demonstrably occurred with Christ; rather, the resurrection of all believers is comprised in that of Christ, which is the origin of theirs, as verse 21f. clearly shows. A disciple of Paul discovered a fitting formulation for this idea; "for you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" . . . (Col. 3:3f.). Paul himself formulates it more paradoxically when he says: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Given freedom from death, freedom from the world and its powers is also given. The man of faith is freed from the cares of one who relies upon himself, has the world (supposedly) at his disposal, and yet is its victim. He knows only one care, "how he may please the Lord" (II Cor. 5:9). Free from the world's care which binds one to perishing things, free from "worldly grief" which produces death (II Cor. 7:10), he faces the world free, as one who rejoices with those who

rejoice and weeps with those who weep (Rom. 12:45), one who participates in the tumult of the world but does so with an inner aloofness—"as if he did it not", "let those who have wives be as if they had not, and those who mourn as if they mourned not, and those who rejoice as if they rejoiced not, and those who buy as if they possessed not, and those who have to do with the world as if they had nothing to do with it" (I Cor. 7:29-31 tr.), in other words, as free men.

In I Cor. 15:25f. death itself appears as a power (in personifying imagery), as the last enemy. Its annihilation is the last act of the work of salvation when the freedom of man will be fully experienced.

The Ethical Dimension of Freedom

In the last part of this paper, we need to discuss the ethical and the contemporary implications of the Christian view of freedom.

The fact that Paul divides his letters into first a "dogmatic" or a theological part and then an attached "ethical" part shows that we cannot treat either of these concepts as an independent theme. "It is a characteristic mark of style that unexpectedly eschatological references keep emerging in paraenesis"¹ (Rom. 13:11f.; I Cor. 7:31; Phil. 4:5). Freedom is now a liberation from the compulsion of works, and thus freedom to turn to the brother with whom I am in solidarity as a sinner, because Christ has also died for him.

The knowledge of being at the end of the world, as it were, in fact brings about a disclosure of man's relationship to the world: the opening up of freedom from the world is liberation from concern about myself and my salvation, because this is already taken care of. In this way, it is clear that ethics does not describe the pious man, but the life and rule of love. Certainly the imperative follows from the indicative. But it is wrongly defined unless it is clear that it is God himself who creates the willing and the accomplishing (Phil. 2:13). "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure". In that case, what is the imperative for? It is appointed because God does not necessarily work as a natural force, but through faith, by making men children, and by the spirit which is the spirit of freedom

¹ Conzelmann, op. cit., p. 283.

(II Cor. 3: 17). By this token it can be seen how we are set in motion and what we have to do: to consecrate ourselves (I Thess. 4:3). It is part of the work of the spirit that he holds us fast in the world, in faith. It is the freedom of the new way of life (II Cor. 3:17). We are no longer in the grip of sin, but can move forward. But because this is not our own possibility, but a given, strange possibility, there arises the apparently paradoxical rule: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25; of Rom. 8:14). In practice, the eschatological attitude to the world is love.

Conclusion

The question for the contemporary Christian is, "How can Christians make use of moral law for their guidance without destroying Christian freedom?"¹ Traditionally, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic Christians have been reluctant to show the same independence in dealing with the law which, for example, Jesus showed when he allowed his disciples to pluck grain on the Sabbath and appealed from the Mosaic Law permitting divorce to the original law of the Creator prohibiting it. This is natural, since they know all too well that, unlike him, they cannot "speak as one having authority". Yet they should not refuse to appeal to their own reason and conscience in interpreting and applying moral laws to their own situations.

What should be the Christian's attitude for example, towards the Mosaic law forbidding the taking of interest on loans? It is well known that medieval Christians regarded it as binding, that Calvin allowed moderate interest on certain kinds of loans but not on others, that modern Christians pay little attention to the law. Should it be literally obeyed, at least in some cases? Should it be interpreted to permit moderate but forbid exorbitant interest? Does it have any implication for the division of an industry's profits between the capitalist and the labourer? Or is it irrelevant in a modern capitalistic economy very different from the ancient Hebrew economy? There is no simple answer to these questions but the Christians can hardly evade the responsibility of asking them and seeking answers to them. Or again does

¹ See George F. Thomas, *Christian Ethics and Philosophy* (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), pp. 138f.

the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill", require the Christians to repudiate capital punishment or birth control? These are thorny questions, but they cannot be escaped. No doubt this was what was in Kant's mind, in his linking of morality with freedom. Kant's point is that there is no sense in morality, no sense in using a term like 'duty', unless there is *moral freedom*. "*Ought implies can*"¹. That is, it makes no sense to say of someone that he ought to do something unless it is in his power, unless he has the freedom to do that thing. Unless we are free to do or to refrain from doing at least some of the things we do, morality has no meaning.

It is when Christians can be independent in their use of moral laws that Christian freedom can have its full meaning for them. Freedom no doubt is a precious word to the modern man, to Africans, to Nigerians—it means that no one can tell us what we must think, no one can arbitrarily throw us into prison, no one can demand that we must subscribe to a state—imposed religion or that we vote for a designated candidate, etc.

Christians should know that these political freedoms are a symbol of the more profound and total freedom which, as we have seen, is to be found in Christ. The new life which is the gift to us in baptism is a life of freedom, a freedom which delivers us from the bondage to the world, the flesh and the devil, and which opens to us an almost infinite range of choices. St Paul, writing from a background in which the requirements of holiness were set forth in legalistic detail, was able to say, 'All things are lawful for me . . .' Later, St Augustine understood this freedom in Christ so well that he could counsel his fellow Christians to love God and then do as they pleased. To know that God accepts us as we are is to be free indeed.

St Paul, however, was equally aware of the difficulties that can be caused by the irresponsible use of freedom. He had seen the hurt feelings, the misunderstanding, the cruelty, and the over-indulgence resulting from such irresponsibility, as we saw in Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Galatians. Even as he proclaimed that all things were lawful to him, he faced the difficult knowledge that "all things are not expedient".

¹ Thomas McPherson, *The Philosophy of Religion* (London & New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Ltd, 1965), p. 93.

As St Paul again points out, sometimes our freedom serves as "a cloak of maliciousness". We call our cruelty "candor". We claim that our selfish sexuality is only "openness and love". We conceal our nepotism, clannishness, or racism as being "the freedom to choose our own friends".

Like our political freedom, Christian freedom must be constantly redefined and guarded. We must be sensitive to the nuances of freedom, so that we may freely choose to avoid those actions which may be harmful to our brethren, so that we may lovingly choose to serve Him "whose service is perfect freedom".

Symposium: What is Freedom?

OPENING SPEECH BY THE REV. PROF. E. BOLAJI IDOWU

WE come to the Symposium, usually the highlight of our Religious Studies Conference. We have had lectures from individual persons giving us various viewpoints on the delicate and important subject of "freedom". This evening we have here with us people who are learned, experienced in various disciplines and who have come to discuss together the matter or the subject "What is Freedom?"

On my right, I have Mr Bola Ige, described on this sheet as a legal practitioner living in Salvation Army Road. I am not sure about the relationship, but... (laughter); Bola Ige is a learned legal practitioner as well as a politician, as you know, and so shall be able to look at the matter from various angles. On the left, we have Dr J. Akinpelu who is in the Department of Adult Education; of course, he has come to educate us as adults on the subject of freedom. Then we have Dr B. O. Oloruntimehin, of the Department of History, who will approach the whole matter from the historical angle and maybe he can tell us what it is all about historically. Then we have Dr M. O. A. Abdul of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies who will speak from his experience as a Yoruba as well as from his experience as a religious man and from his academic experience as a member of staff of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. So, ladies and gentlemen, you have before you a panel really worthy to be so called to discuss this important subject and I am quite sure that they are going to do it very ably. Now I will call upon Mr Bola Ige to open the floor, as they say.

MR BOLA IGE

Mr Chairman—I think that will be the most innocuous way of addressing a Methodist Archbishop (laughter), a past President of the Student Christian Movement and a Professor of Religious Studies, and who looks very unchristian in his dress (laughter). Ladies and gentlemen, because I think those will be the lowest common denominators for the other people and for those who are sitting with us, I have been asked to speak in this symposium and to think with you about the subject, "What is Freedom"? Actually, having heard that

various people have come from various disciplines to talk to you about freedom, I think it is superfluous for anyone like me to contribute to it. The reason is that my view is probably the most diffuse of everyone of all the other persons who are here this evening. You have a history scholar, religious scholars, Biblical-theological scholars, and scholars in education. But I am the only politician, or I may be described as a politician, that is true; it is only politics that is banned in Nigeria, the politicians are not banned (laughter). I also practise the law profession, and many people think that I must be a big liar; then of course, to make matters worse, I happen to be a very committed Christian, and I think to some people it will not go down very well, especially when you know the type of people who have spoken to you about how rich they are without believing in any God.

May I say that I shall try and deal with the subject from three angles. The first one is freedom in a cursory way as a lawyer will look at it, secondly, as the politician will look at it, and thirdly, as I think as a Christian. Talking about the legal side, really there is nothing like a definition of freedom in the legal field because you know, whether you are a client or you are a lawyer, you are always not free in the hand of one or the other. If you are a client in the hand of a lawyer, you are his victim. He will take many guineas (I think we call it naira and kobo these days) (laughter) out of you, and so you are not free. But talking seriously, I tried to look into the books and it is curious that it does not appear that legislation has dealt at all with what one can call freedom. And if one thinks seriously about it, you cannot find legislation and have freedom. Legislation exists to circumscribe you. In that sense I think it is quite reasonable that the law profession has not spent so many volumes of books of philosophical writings or theses about freedom. Legislation has to do with the regulation or relationship between one person and another person, whether that person be human or corporate, which is inanimate, and legislation exists to set guidelines along which you must carry on your activities. Of course, what we lawyers do is that whenever any legislation is passed, we try to look for loop-holes through which people will get freedom. That may include looking at the loop-hole of the internal revenue laws so that you can evade taxation, so you will be free to spend your money the way you like.

Then we come to the other aspect, which very many people come in contact with in the law profession. And that is in relationship to acts of crime. Of course, there are many laws or commandments concerning crime, and they are all negative: "Thou shall not do". Of course, the most important one is "Thou shall not be caught" (laughter). So that, I think that lawyers don't really have much to contribute in any discussion about the meaning of freedom. We labour and move and breath and have our being in forces which surround you with "don'ts".

Now, from the political angle, there are very many philosophies, very many theories; I mean historians will tell you about all the various philosophers of the world who have been writing about freedom. There is one philosopher who says "Man is born free but everywhere is in chains". I think that gives us a lot to think about. We politicians like to talk very much about freedom. But it is freedom from one thing in order that we could be ensnared by another. When we sought freedom from the British and we sent them packing, everyone knew that there was not going to be a vacuum, I mean the politicians were going to take over and they were going to do whatever they liked with the Nigerians. Probably they were going to do worse than the British did to the Nigerians, so it was freedom from the British and not from the Nigerians. And of course there followed a group of young thugs called majors who wanted to liberate Nigerians and give them freedom from the politicians, and who seized power from the barrel of the gun. Well, who am I to say that we are not having freedom under the soldiers today! I will just get one bullet, and I don't think I am ready for that (laughter). But when we talk about freedom, even in the political sense, we only mean that state which you can create in society where people can live reasonably. And that is why whether you call the thing democracy or a socialist system, there is no absolute freedom. Among the so-called democratic countries, you will find that they say you can say whatever you like, you can join any society you like, you can do anything you like, as long as you do not thwart part of the laws of libel and sedition. And when the heavy hand of the government falls on you, under libel or sedition, God help you. You can languish in jail for God knows how many years. So freedom in circumscribed. Even in the most democratic

countries, like India, they do not give the vote to people who are younger than 18 years of age. You see, because until you are 18, you are not supposed to be a real human being, and therefore, there can be freedom for everybody except brilliant 15-year-olds. Of course, in a socialist society, you can only have freedom when it benefits the whole society, and in order that the individual may have freedom, it may be necessary to suppress his freedom, because your freedom is supposed to be most fully expressed when the society is free. The question is, "Who describes or who decides what is good for the society and what is good for the individual?" I am saying that there is nothing like absolute freedom; and in the political world, it will be the crudest politician who would tell you that your freedom will be absolute whenever anyone is in power, whether he be military or civilian.

The third thing I would like to say (I think I have only a few minutes, so that I will give room to the others) is the way I see it as a Christian. Actually, Christians are very funny people because, you know, their own attitude of freedom is very strange. I think their description of freedom can be found in the hymn, "Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be a conqueror". I think it is the strangest thing that one can ever know. And of course, they would also say, it is in the service of Christ that you find the perfect freedom. In other words, it is when they are the most slavish persons to Christ that they find the greatest freedom. Christians are very funny people! Thank you very much, Mr Chairman (laughter).

REV. PROFESSOR E. BOLAJI IDOWU

Thank you very much, Mr Bola Ige, of the Salvation Army Road (laughter), and incidentally also the National President of the S.C.M. of Nigeria.

Next, we go to the historian, Dr B. O. Oloruntimehin, to make his contribution.

DR B. O. OLORUNTIMEHIN

Good evening, Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am happy that at least I don't have to talk about religion. When I first got the notice to come and participate in the

symposium, I said, "O God, what business have I got talking to religious leaders, being so poorly equipped?" And luckily, apart from the Chairman and the many dignitaries in our midst, we have Mr Bola Ige, who this evening has saved me the problem of having to talk about religion in relation to freedom. Because, quite frankly, I think apart from the futility of trying to define freedom, religion happens to be also one of the most intriguing phenomena in one's life. We have enough problems trying to define what religion is or the various facets of religion, the various manifestations of religion, and we have a more confounding problem talking about freedom. And I think the speaker before me has quite clearly illustrated the problem. I think to go on talking about freedom may not in fact contribute anything to our understanding. What I intend to do is to look at it as a kind of ideology, a set of ideas linked with action, to look at it in terms of efforts made so far in various societies, including our own, to achieve freedom either for the individual or for the collectivity, and I hope you will permit my effrontery at the end of it to make a few remarks as a very detached observer of the Church about how I think our freedom has been manifested in the growth of the Church itself. It is a good thing; I think it might help us to look at why we are here, different types of Christians, as we are collected here this evening, and how this, in fact, is linked with the search for freedom. First, we've got a bigger definition of freedom and how elusive it can be. The search for freedom in that line one could trace back to the whole question of how an individual can maintain his personal liberty and still be a member of society. I think that in all ages one could say that there has always been a problem reconciling personal freedom with being a member either of the family, or of an institution like a Church, or the society or the nation. It is not only that there is nothing like absolute freedom, it is also that it is very debatable that you have freedom at all. At the stage of a child, we generally take for granted that this person does not know anything. He needs to be taught by example, by formal training, what the sociologists call the "socialization process". And it is only when we think that he knows what he is talking about that we can allow him to exercise freedom—that is freedom of thought. Now, that is one part of the problem and we can then go on and say that the only reason we don't

allow him the vote is that he does not know what to do with the vote. What is it all about, choosing between one politician and the other, one party and the other, one form of government and the other. He needs to be trained before he knows exactly how, before he can be trusted in exercising freedom. In this sense, of course, freedom means nothing more than a choice, either choice between two evils, or a choice between two things that are regarded as good, because as Shakespeare says, "there is nothing good or bad, except thinking makes it so". So that, in fact we need first to let this person know how to think before he can be free. The point of course, is that within a family you expect a child to conform to certain things, and it is only within that he can express his freedom. You have already constrained him by the norms subscribed to by the family, by the norms to which the larger society subscribes. Whether this be a traditional African society or a traditional European society, the same is valid everywhere. Similarly in any organization like the Church, we have a set of beliefs. In the first instance without subscribing to these beliefs, a member cannot in fact be legitimate in contributing to the activities of the group. But even the belief itself sets a limit to the freedom, and when people talk of the need to have freedom of thought, in other words, freedom to think as you like, now it is an exercise in contradiction, in the sense that by the time you have laid down what you have to believe, you have circumscribed exactly just how far you can exercise freedom. Of course, I know that the Biblical scholars have all the huge volumes of analysis of what ought to be and what ought not, with due deference to Islamic scholars. You see, you find among Muslims a lot of things as to what constitutes the exact interpretation, the correct interpretation of what Mohammed the prophet has said, just as we have our own argument about what happened either in relation to the stories of the Old Testament or the Gospels. Now, what I am trying to say is that in the search for freedom, you find that all the time you are circumscribed by the very norms to which we ourselves have subscribed, and within the framework of which society expects us to operate.

Now, of course, the people who want to be absolutely free have always also been found to be against the idea of any organized society. In Europe in particular, to the Nineteenth

Century or earlier, you still have a few of them; even now, you have the people who are called anarchists, people who believe that any form of authority whatever, be it ecclesiastical or political or social, is inimical to the exercise of freedom of the individual. Now, the problem, of course, is, without any kind of organization, as some British philosophers put it, "life is brutish, nasty and not worth living in". So, there isn't much choice even for the anarchist, in the sense that you cannot live as isolated human beings. You need to be social, and being social involves you in subscribing to rules and regulations. Now, on the level of the nation, take Nigeria for instance, you want to be free, to have the kind of political ideology you like, to pursue your freedom of religion, to think as you like. But the truth is that your own freedom is limited by the freedom of your neighbour. And in this case now, in a multi-national place like Nigeria, your freedoms are in fact not only constrained by the freedoms of your neighbours but also by the freedom of your other component nations making up the state. And this is why I think one can understand why law, in any case, any constitution, means nothing more than a legal order for the society telling you nothing other than what you cannot do. It cannot do more than tell you what you cannot do because it is easier that way, to define just what you should do in order to survive with your neighbour and with the other state. Now, of course, we also have the whole question of what they call, in your interaction with society or with people in society, certain things that cannot be written down, and here we talk of the something that we regard as in-born, that certain things are of your right, by birth, as human beings. And we have this expressed sometimes by people in terms of natural justice which is also supposed to imply the freedom of the individual, respect for the person of the individual; you also have this translated in rather loosely connected form in the form of the constitutional guarantees that we have. We talk of the fundamental human rights, natural rights and natural justice finding expression in legal terms; as you have been told earlier on, there are very few human rights that you can regard as inviolate or fundamental. Much depends upon the state of the particular society at the moment; in a state of war, for instance, it is usually taken for granted that all rights are suspended. This is why the government takes care to tell you

that there is an emergency, as I understand we still have even now. When an emergency occurs, the government, as the only body that can exercise legal violence, can send the soldiers to go and do some job, and we can also be permitted to violate what we call natural rights and natural justice, like when we kill each other in civil war. Now, I am just drawing up these ideas to show how disparate and how diverse ideas of freedom can be. And in actual practice, you find people who, of course, say that even when we have defined it legally that we are free to do many things, there are, of course, certain forces that will prevent you from enjoying freedom. Until I come to talk about the Church, I don't want really to talk about the relationship between belief and fear, except to point out that some people think that, in fact, the essence of belief is the reaction to fear; people are afraid of the uncertain future that they don't know, and this is why in fact, they are religious, and this is why you have not only Christian churches but the various religious organizations that we have in the world. Now, I am not necessarily saying that they are right, but this is one point that we need to take note of. And if we take it this way that all belief systems can be regarded as ideological systems, that is, that there is nothing absolute about them, we cannot see them as real truth. Again, I don't think we need to get involved in the analysis of what constitutes truth. Even that is in dispute and sometimes I am amazed when people say, "I tell you the Gospel truth", and one is tempted to ask, "Which gospel?" (laughter) Now the point, of course, is that people believe that fear is one of these constraining factors. Others think that poverty, ignorance and so on lie behind the inability to exercise freedom, and this is why you have UNESCO, to contribute towards the eradicating of ignorance by educating people so that they can set their minds free. If you look at it that a child is deprived of his liberty or exercise of freedom, precisely because we think he does not know, similarly an adult who does not know is in very many senses a child. And people think that ignorance is one basic factor sustaining tyranny, sustaining fear and related problems, depending on who you are, including religiosity, that if people knew a little more, they would not fear. This is just one side of it. Poverty on the other hand is also related to fear, to ignorance and so on. And this is why you find some people would not talk of

having political independence, or freedom for their country. Even when you have got that, freedom, they would still say, is an attitude of mind, you are not free because your mind is not free. And you cannot be free if you are not trained, if you are not educated (I don't mean that you must come to the University), exposed either through the society at large or through formal education to things that you ought to know. And people would say of course that a nation cannot be free until you have eradicated poverty. And all the things that make it impossible to eradicate poverty at least affect a number of people. You find this, in fact, seems to be at the origin of radical political thinking; that the man who dominates his less fortunate brothers is able to do so either because he is richer, he controls a lot of wealth, he is more enlightened, he knows how to manipulate these other people or, in any case, he is able to because his position *vis-à-vis* the position of the others under him is much superior. He is richer and more enlightened. And I think that there is nothing in it, it is not necessarily a communist interpretation. Now when the Europeans were to conquer Africa, one major factor, one good propaganda weapon they used in Europe was the need to civilize these Africans, the so-called civilizing nation. The civilizing nation, of course, assumes that even the fact that you know, and that you believe in your own culture as being superior to that of others, gives you a right and a duty to go out and civilize them. And that you civilize them, of course, by colonizing them. In the history of the Church in the colonies, there was the attempt to train the indigenous people to participate more meaningfully in the work of propagating the faith. But propagating the faith was also seen as a civilizing nation, you know, because it was said these "fetishists", these "pagans" (very derogatory terms for describing traditional religion) need to be changed. But, even in the Church, you find that as time goes on, even the whole idea of accepting that the civilization has reached a stage at which the black man rises to the same level as the white man, was not easily accepted. Struggle for political freedom was also paralleled by struggle for more meaningful participation by African church members within the Church Organization. I don't think I want to go into details about this.

Now, as I have said, the need to eradicate poverty as a pre-condition for enjoying freedom expresses itself in the many movements, socialist or communist movements, seeking to restructure society. People say we must take hold of the means of production, the state must come in and take control of the means of production so that you can distribute it evenly. But I think that the first speaker mentioned to you about freedom within this organization, especially in a communist or socialist one, that we need to subscribe to an official doctrine very similar to the Church doctrine, that you must accept it, otherwise you are a heretic. It is like you are liberated from a few feudal lords in order to be enslaved to the State.

Now, coming briefly to the Church, I think you would see that now we have the various denominations, all of them believing, I have been taught in school, in the same Christ, in the same God. But not agreeing on how this God should be worshipped from the faces you see in white and so on (laughter) and the different other modes and so on. You find that freedom in this sense had developed as far as the Church was concerned not only with tolerance of other ideologies like Islam, like that of traditional religion, but also with serving Christ with the hope of gaining economic objectives. Now, from the crusades you have the burning of people in order to save their souls, because it has become a metaphysical problem. You are no longer concerned physically with the body, you are concerned with the soul in the other world. And therefore in the 16th and the 17th century, you still feel free to burn them alive, just like the English used to feel free to throw their witches or people suspected of witchery into the River Thames. The idea, of course, is to save their souls. Now you see that up to the reformation. The history of the reformation of course, you know about. It was the search for greater freedom for members of the Church that drove Martin Luther and his men to try and break away from the Church which was the twin organ of the Roman Empire. What I am trying to say is that within that Church at that time, you were free if you were also a subject of the Holy Roman Empire. In other words, if you accepted to be dominated, then you were free. But the heretics that we have talked about were seeking freedom. Now, of course you have also got your Anglican Movement, and as Henry VIII said "still looking for freedom for his people and for himself to do a few things".

He also declared in the process that England is an empire. What he was saying by calling England an empire was that "I have finished with you politically and you don't dominate my people" and so on and so forth. Then of course you know why the Methodists came about. (laughter) Now, as for our own—the so-called break-away Churches—people really are trying to ensure that we can still preserve a bit of our own tradition and still accept Christianity. Now you also know how the constraint of the Church operating in a colonial situation forced a few people out in order to find a small meaningful expression for their souls. Now, I am just throwing all these to you to emphasise one point: that freedom is such a many-sided problem, that freedom does not mean the same thing to two people, that in any case, you find so many expressions of freedom in the world and these expressions of freedom create more problems than they solve, and one can only hope that by the time you finish your conference, you would have found some solutions to them.

PROFESSOR E. BOLAJI IDOWU

Thank you very much Dr Oloruntimehin. We shall now turn to Dr Abdul.

DR ABDUL

Mr Chairman (even though Mr Bola Ige has warned us not to call him "Chairman" because it is an improper way of addressing him), ladies and gentlemen. Don't take me to be funny if I begin by saying that the word "freedom" is an enigma. We have been trying to sidetrack the word freedom. It has no meaning by itself. Freedom from what? In order to make it more meaningful to us, in order to make it easier for us to discuss and deal with, we have to attach that preposition: Freedom from what? I know, for example, when you run to the doctor, you are trying to be free, you are looking for freedom from death. And when you take nivaquin or noroquin, you are trying to gain freedom from malaria. In the same way, when you think you are gaining independence, we have been told by the politician that even then, there is nothing like political freedom. We are trying to gain

freedom from someone. While you gain freedom from someone, then you become enslaved to the other. So that freedom has got to be defined. What kind of freedom? Freedom from what? Freedom from want? That is why you struggle. The porter will always go in the morning and would like to collect as many loads as possible. What is he trying to do? He is trying to gain freedom from poverty, or freedom from hunger. In the same way, in the New Testament it says (with apologies to Professor Idowu) "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". Free from what? Possibly free from ignorance or disease? So in the same way, we talk of freedom from differences. But then we have been told that even in society, if you listen to the sociologist, there is no freedom at all, because your own freedom is circumscribed by the freedom of your neighbour. So that in society there is nothing like freedom. But man is the centre of everything we have been discussing, whether freedom from want, freedom from ignorance, freedom from this or freedom from that. Man has been the centre of this. And so let us look at man, even though the word man itself is an enigma also. Let's look at man. It is man who has been running here and there, helter-skelter, to gain freedom. So let us see what freedom man is really trying to gain. Well we have seen that man tries to gain freedom from want, freedom from control by someone, freedom from ignorance, freedom from disbelief (that's when you go into the Church and become very religious; you are seeking freedom from disbelief). So that you have various things from which man has been seeking freedom. But then let us look into man himself as one seeking for freedom, freedom in different ways, freedom in different aspects. The historian has told us about freedom, the efforts of man, in the various spheres of life, in the various centuries also, to gain freedom; the more man tries to seek for freedom, the more he gets involved in being a slave. Now, look at man seeking freedom everywhere all the time. Now this is a conference of religious men and so, I would like to be quite at home with you. And in that I will try to look at man looking for freedom in a theological sense or philosophical sense. Man is looking for freedom, freedom has always eluded man. But as a religious or theological concern, the freedom of man is freedom from control by God; you seek freedom from the Omnipotence of God. If it is so, then let

us look at how far man has gained freedom from the Omnipotence of God. If you look at this, then you can look at man trying to gain freedom, because the religious freedom has more control over man. When you obtain political freedom, you are still there. When we gained political independence from Great Britain, we at that time, even now, we haven't gained religious freedom from the churches. Have we? They still control our thinking, they still give us fear, the fear of punishment, the fear of what will befall us when we die and when we get into another world. The fear is still there. We haven't gained freedom from them. We haven't gained freedom from economic control. So that these are various ways that man tries to seek freedom, and the more he does the more freedom itself becomes elusive.

Now, I say, man tries to gain freedom from the Omnipotence of God; how has man been able or how has man failed to gain this? Man is the centre of the Universe, he is the centre of everything. But then, we have to look at man and the actions of man. From these we have to see that man has control over certain actions of his. In which case then he becomes responsible for his action. It is then he can be judged right, he can be judged wrong. And also we think certain conditions have control over man, for which we cannot hold man responsible. Let me give out an example of the first one—action in which man has control. An example of this is a man coming from the roof of a house by a ladder. The coming—down of man by that ladder shows man has control of his action, the action of coming down from the roof to the ground by the ladder. But what do you think of the man who falls from the roof to the ground; has he control over that? So it means such an action has control over man for which man cannot be responsible. Here we have a difficulty between man and the freedom of man. Is man really free? No! Then man has to have some freedom, if really you want to hold man responsible for his actions, otherwise someone will have to be responsible for the actions of man. Otherwise man cannot be judged right or judged wrong. So that in this I wouldn't go very far, I won't go wide. What is the relationship of man to the Omnipotence of God? All religions—Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, all of it, and any religion for that matter, the tendency is for all religions to make us believe that God is Omnipotent. God has omnipotence.

It was He who created everything: good and evil, the pure one, the bad one, is created by God. But at the same time, we are told that God is beautiful, God is merciful, God is God of justice, so that in this case, we have to look into the freedom of man and the omnipotence of God. If man has control over certain actions, then man has some sort of freedom, but the fact that certain actions have control over him shows that his freedom has been limited in some forms or in some ways. Now, man is free to choose whichever way he wants to go. Man has been given a sort of freedom. For example, see the elephant, as big as it is, it doesn't eat anything except the leaves and the grass. He cannot make any choice, for all his life. The only thing the elephant would eat is the leaves and grass. And look at a lion, he cannot eat anything except flesh. Look at man, he can decide to eat flesh, leaves, fish, anything, and he can even decide not to eat at all. Not only that, man has a stronger freedom. It is freedom to do what he wishes and he wills. Compare with all creatures also: the lion, the elephant; animals as pugnacious as they are, none of them is able to take his own life, even though it can take the life of another creature. But look at man, he can take the life of another man, he can even take his own life, even though we say the freedom of man is still limited and circumscribed. I have given you these examples to show that man has freedom somehow; but then if man has freedom to decide what he wants to do, freedom to have control over certain actions for which he will be held responsible, if man has freedom to decide what to eat and what not to eat, man has freedom to decide where to live and where not to live, then where comes in the omnipotence of God?, Then the theologians of different ages, in the different religions, in order to preserve the omnipotence of God, have continuously told us that man is not free, man has no power to do anything, man has no power to create anything, but all these are attempts to preserve the omnipotence of God. Well, trying to do this, sometimes it is what we are trying to preserve, we are trying to defend, that we look at. We fail to look at what we are trying to create, because once we try to preserve the omnipotence of God and attempt to deprive man of his freedom, then indirectly we are making God responsible for the actions of man. If man does any evil, said God, he is to share in the evil of man; it means you fail

to give a sort of freedom for his actions. Then if man has done some good then you have given God some share of the good man has done. But in this case man cannot be judged right or wrong. So this is how we have to look at the freedom of man and the omnipotence of God. The freedom of man to some extent might limit the omnipotence of God, the absolute omnipotence of God. And if we consider that God is absolutely omnipotent and He has full control over the actions of man, there is still something else which is going to limit the omnipotence of God. It is this, that we say God is merciful, God is the God of justice. If He is God of justice as I do believe and you do believe, I am sure, then there wouldn't be any evil. The evil of man shouldn't have decreed or decided that man should do some evil. But then, as I do believe that God is absolutely just, He doesn't create any evil. I believe that it is man who turns the creation, whatever God has created. I give you an example. When God creates fire, fire is meant for us to cook, fire is meant for us to see the light and find our way. But now, has man not used fire to roast a man, to roast a car? We were all witnesses in 1965 here! So, fire has been used in a wrong way by man. In this case man has freedom and that is why man has to be judged right or wrong. So that in this case, what we have to look into as religious men is how far can we reconcile the real freedom of man with the omnipotence of God. Is man really free? Or is man not free? Gentlemen, this is what we have to look into.

PROFESSOR E. BOLAJI IDOWU

Thank you very much Dr Abdul. We shall now turn to Dr J. A. Akinpelu to make his own contribution.

DR J. A. AKINPELU

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Happily, I am very lucky to be the last speaker, because, in that case, all that I wanted to say has been said by my predecessors (laughter). And therefore, if I don't talk too long it is because much has been said already and also because the time is well spent. Nevertheless, I have been invited here to make some contribution and I must.

Well, first of all, I want to emphasise the importance of this topic: "What is Freedom?" In fact, it is an enigmatic question. "What is Freedom?" is the sort of question that Socrates would ask: "What is Freedom?" And the organisers of this conference have been wise to ask this question, because it can never be answered. There is a philosopher who, if you ask him "What is freedom?" will answer, "Freedom is freedom and nothing else", and that answers you. But seriously speaking I think the question of freedom is too important to confine us to what one philosopher says or doesn't say. The question of freedom is very important to this age because this is an age in which freedom is really being discussed, it is an age in which people even declare that there is no freedom. Let me quote you an example. One of the psychologists, B. F. Skinner, in his 1972 book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, says, "My book is an effort to demonstrate how things go bad when you make a fetish out of individual freedom and dignity. If you insist that individual rights are the *summum bonum*, then the whole structure of society falls down". That is, choose freedom and the society will collapse. So you see that it is really important for freedom to be a topic for discussion. We see that freedom on the political level is being denied in some parts of Africa; we see that freedom on the economic level is being denied also in this part of the world. Some parts of the world which are already free politically find themselves being enslaved economically. Probably you have heard freedom being spoken of by students; we talk of students' freedom, academic freedom, all sorts of freedom. So you see that it is only necessary to concentrate on this idea of freedom and try to look at it for what it is. Well, I would like to approach this topic from a really free point of view. First of all, I believe that all the various definitions and conceptions of freedom are based on prior ideological commitments. That is, if everybody gives a definition of freedom, look carefully at it, go behind it, find out the assumption behind it, and you will discover that there is one belief which he holds, there is one faith which he holds, which he is trying to give to you, and it is on the basis of that that he defines his freedom. It is a pity we don't have the time, but if I run through the history of ideologies and history of definitions of freedom, you will see that this is true. Take the Greeks; they have the view of man, the view of his person,

and a view of the cosmos, and it is on the basis of that that they define freedom as something you attain when you are already a good citizen, when you are a political being, i.e., a social man; this is when you have freedom. Take the Romans. For the Romans, it is the same. The safety of his state is the supreme law, and it is on the basis of this that they define freedom. Take also the Epicureans. Because they lacked political freedom, because they lacked material freedom, they concentrated on spiritual freedom, the freedom of the soul, and therefore when they define freedom, they define it in terms of the inner citadel, the soul, that part of me which you cannot touch; my body you can have but that very soul of mine you cannot touch. If you take the Christian point of view too, you see that it is an ideology; you have to believe first in God before you can say knowledge of God is true freedom. Otherwise, it is really impossible. So also it is in the modern world; you discover that people define freedom according to the circumstances in which they are. We are talking of freedom in this day and age, political freedom, economic freedom, social freedom and all kinds of freedom. This is because in this type of society in which we are, we find that we are being more and more controlled. I think it is true to say that we are being more and more controlled, but rather than adopt some accusation, I would say that this is really an age in which man ought to assert his freedom; this is an age in which man ought to claim his freedom, not freedom from God, but freedom in God. God is that ultimate commitment to which you give yourself, in which case God is that ideal thing; being the ideal thing, it means that He offers you an ideal which you can aim at. This will not go down with some theologians, but I am not acting as a theologian, I am giving a personal opinion and my personal belief and personal commitments. So you see that in this day and age, we have to look at circumstances, and we have to see that talking about freedom is very important.

The second point I want to raise is one that has already been raised but which I want also to emphasize. This is that freedom entails responsibilities. If you say you are free, you must at the same time also claim responsibility, because freedom means that you have the ability to choose between either two evils or one good or one evil, or between two goods, and once you are able to choose you have seen the

difference between the two, I mean you have the knowledge to see the differences and consequences that you expect out of the two, and once you have made the choice, then it becomes obligatory for you to accept responsibility for the choice that you have made. I think this is not contrary to the Christian point of view nor the Muslim point of view, because the Christian and the Muslim believe that freedom is a trust (as somebody put it yesterday) given to man by Allah or by God. If it is a trust, it means that in exercising it man must be responsible, that is, he will be called to question, he will be accountable for the use to which he is putting the freedom which he is given. But even if you don't believe in God or you don't believe in Allah you can still believe that responsibility is something that goes automatically with freedom. This is a question that agitates my mind as an educator, because as an educator you find students who want to claim freedom: students' freedom, students' right, students' power; but they don't want to claim students' responsibility, which is very important; if you want to claim freedom you must at the same time accept responsibility. Responsibility has been defined as conscious acceptance of your being the author of what has happened, that is, you have created something, you have created a situation, and therefore, you must accept what follows. And the story is told of an important criminal, Adolf Eichman, who, when he was being tried in Israel, claimed that he was acting under the authority of the Nazi state, that he had no choice, that he was asked to confine six million Jews to the gas oven, and he had to do it. And, of course, the prosecutor told him that he did not have to do it because he had a choice; he had a choice because he could have refused to do it, and it was quite possible for him to refuse to do it. And he said, "Well, that means that I could have been killed". And he said, "Yes, that is the choice; you made the choice; you either get killed earlier or you get killed later, and you are getting killed later now." So you see that whether you are considering it from the Christian point of view or from the Muslim point of view or from the humanistic point of view, which I think is not as bad as people take it to be, or from any other point of view, you see that freedom goes with responsibility and that the two of them cannot be disengaged. I don't want to take any longer.

Thank you very much Dr Akinpelu. Now I want to know if any of the members of the panel would like to reply to any of the things said by the others. I am going to restrict them to one and half minutes each.

MR BOLA IGE

Mr Chairman, I started the kite flying this evening because I was the first speaker and I just thought the best thing was to say almost nothing at all and let others speak, and then quickly take up the things which I thought ought to be taken up. May I say that I am quite surprised at some of the views expressed at this table. I will say that I have committed myself, shall I say religiously or ideologically, and therefore, I would like to say that since it is part of our job here to say whether we agree with what some of the people have said or not, I will express my views. I think that freedom is not an enigma—freedom can be defined as freedom can be really known. I would try and describe what I mean by freedom—freedom is “that state in which you do not regard yourself inhibited”, or freedom is “that state in which your potentialities are given full room to bloom or to blossom”, and therefore, I should not think that you cannot define freedom. When I said that we move from one freedom to another, it is only freedom relatively. To the man who is in the bush freedom may mean one thing; to the man who is completely civilized it would mean another thing; and it would need all the professors of this world to deny such people what they mean by freedom, and I too would say, and I believe, you can have freedom.

May I say that I do not also believe that freedom and responsibility go together or that they mean the same thing; I also do not accept that man is the centre of the universe. It is not only unchristological, it is unscientific, and it is contrary to evolution. Man is not the centre of the universe at all. If the Christians are going to look at it, they will say that it is Christ which is the centre of the universe because He is the water-shed of history. If it is scientific man he would say the sun is the centre of what we know as the universe and not the earth; and if we talk about evolution, probably after some time man will reach his biggest state; I do not know what that state will be. I am not starting a polemic, but I

am saying that it is because of that situation that I believe that you can define what your freedom is. At the time when we got independence from the British, freedom meant political freedom. Today, we know that political freedom is not freedom, it must include economic freedom, so at every given stage, you can define freedom, but it must be that state in which you can do what you feel happily.

DR OLORUNTIMEHIN

Well, Mr Chairman, I think you have taken a bit of my time and I will try and take it back (laughter).

Well, we can define freedom not only as an attitude of mind, but also as a social situation. As an attitude of mind, you could really feel free in a particular situation. As a social situation, this is where we have the problem. We face the problem of relationship between the individual and the other, the question of inter-dependence, relationship with authority, whether this be the Church or the State. And I will just say that here we recognize the problem. For if you take the Christian attitude and put everything on God, then it seems to me to be an attitude of surrender. When my colleague here said that you had your right to walk down the ladder from the roof, I was a bit frightened because maybe we think we determine the state of our minds, but obviously, there must be some forces more powerful than ourselves that can do this. While some people are mad and others are sane, I don't think it is their own choice. And here again, one could also refer to famous St. Augustine or Thomas Aquinas and say that in fact, one can be deliberately contradictory, and in any case, you are just acting, and this is in opposition to the power of reason; in fact, revelation is superior to reason. And if you take that point, then perhaps we don't have any problem in defining freedom, because as somebody put it rather theologically "freedom in God". I don't seem to understand that. Now, on the political side, there is the whole problem that when you are in a group, how do you preserve your freedom? We heard people talk of totalitarian democracy. We have such contradictions, and that is all I want to say.

DR ABDUL

Now, the Chairman has asked me not to speak. He has been trying to bribe me. Now, freedom might be meaningful to you. You have to relate it to something, and that something at the time you get it is a sort of freedom to you. But then, because you want to solve the problem you get into, or when you get a solution, then you create another problem. Because of this, there is no absolute freedom, and so freedom, to be meaningful to you, has to be related to something, and that something itself, in achieving it, could circumscribe the freedom which you have.

COMMENTS BY PROFESSOR E. BOLAJI IDOWU

Thank you very much. Perhaps to that question, first of all: I think your problem of "one in many" or the problem of "one among many" can only be solved when man recognizes a higher authority than himself. The Jesus Christ whom we recognize, most of us, is just the idol of our own imagination, and not the Christ to whom we submit ourselves entirely. We are going to force him to change and he will depart from the place, because we are going to make the kind of change that he didn't want. If God really ruled in the heart of men, then there wouldn't be all these troubles. You will see that division comes when everybody wants to be leader, nobody wants to be the follower. It is man trying to lift himself up by his own ears; it is impossible. You cannot do it. Whether it is in the political realm or the Church or anywhere, if you want to have unity, then you must have a loyalty and allegiance higher than yourself to which you can give all your attention, all your allegiance. That is that.

Now, we are bringing this conference to a close now, and it has been a wonderful week, rounded off with this symposium. We are very grateful to our learned friends, the panel of this evening, for their contributions to it. As I have said a few times since we began this conference, there are two possible ways (there may be many more) of facing a question. One is the "academic" way, when you just air things. It doesn't really mean much to you as a matter of ultimate concern and therefore you just give your views and then you can make whatever you like of it. If we look at the matter academically as it has been looked at in a few ways this

evening, we can see that this question will continue until the end of man's life. It is like the old buffoon, you know, a joker in the royal household. He committed an offence—he was a very beloved buffoon—and the king was very sad to see that he was going to have to put this buffoon to death for the crime. And he called the buffoon and said, "I am very sorry about this, you know that I am very fond of you, but I am going to give you one concession. I will allow you to choose your own manner of death". And the buffoon said, "Your majesty, I thank you very much. I choose to die of old age". Now, if we look at this question and we just academically want to exercise our minds, to amuse ourselves, I think we may say that freedom is indefinable. We cannot define it, and it will go on cropping up until the end of man's life, and there is no need to worry ourselves about it. But if we look at the matter in the way that the frog looked at it the other day—you remember, when that child was playing beside the pond, he was throwing the stones into the pond and the frog said, "What is play to you is death to us"—in that sense, if we take the matter as of ultimate concern, it is about time man stopped drifting, drifting in consequence of intellectual laziness, spiritual indolence, lack of the strain of making the effort to find what is the real metaphysic of his own nature, why he is here, and what he is expected to do to stop this calamity or disaster of life, then as much as it lies within our power, we must try to find out what is this ever-cropping-up question of freedom? What is it? And I think that from various angles this evening we have approached the matter. I don't think I need to go into all these, whether by way of comment on what has been said or what has not been said. But there is no doubt about this in my own mind: man is made free. Freedom is one of the attributes which is given by his Maker. Man can use or abuse this freedom. But this freedom, as I said earlier on, is regulated action, regulated life, regulated behaviour. That does not mean somebody is imposing something from without, but that he lives a life which is free, to be what he should be. And when you are speaking of the omnipotence of God, you don't mean that God who is able to smash things up right, left, and centre; you mean that God is the only one who is absolutely free to be God, not contingent upon anything, not dependent upon anything, who is not controlled, whose action is

not controlled outside his own nature. And when man reaches this stature, then man may, in fact, be locked up in this room, and man will still feel that he is free. As I have said, man must be able to face life and say "yes" to that which is right as far as his knowledge and experience go, and say "no" to that which is wrong as far as his knowledge and experience go. And when man reaches this point, man is a free person indeed. You talk about Socrates. He was a person who was able to go about, and who was able to choose to drink poison, just because he would not compromise with the world, the world of his own time. And this was a free man, a completely free man, even though you will say that in his being killed, he was not free. And I have given you the illustration of the cross, the Cross as a symbol of real freedom, the conquest by good of evil, by the One who has established himself as the one who is able to say "yes" positively, unquestioningly, bearing the consequence in the face of all the odds of life, and say "no" to everything that is wrong.

Now just one more point; a friend has spoken about truth. Here again I say we must stop drifting. As a Christian, I believe firmly in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord. This is the truth to me; Christ is the truth. Now as someone has said, anybody who constitutes himself an honorary member of every religion in the world is just spiritually irresponsible. But that does not mean that I should try to cut other peoples' throats if they are not Christians. As Bola Ige has rightly said, if I am a Christian then I want to prove it not only by behaving as my Lord wants me to behave, but especially by showing that love which is the love of God. God will, of course, bring his rain upon the good and the evil and cause the sun to shine upon the good and evil, God who is perfect in love. I must reflect that love and I cannot be reflecting that love if I am trying to destroy others. But to say that there is nothing like truth, or you say he holds one truth, you hold another, and therefore we are in confusion, I think we must stop this drifting. I think truth is truth as far as you are pursuing it, as far as God has revealed this to you, to me as a Christian, that Christ is the Truth, He is the final "Yes".

PROFESSOR IDOWU'S CLOSING SPEECH

Once again, we are very grateful to Mr Bola Ige of the Salvation Army Road (laughter), Dr J. A. Akinpelu of the Department of Adult Education who has educated us, Dr B. O. Oloruntimehin who has led us through the path of history and Dr Abdul, who has led us into the theology and philosophy not only of Islam but of Christianity also. We are very, very grateful to you and we are grateful to all those who have come to participate in this conference and have shared in it: I wish you all God's blessing.

COMMENT

The June issue of *Orita* contained one of the papers presented at the 1973 Religious Studies Conference of the University of Ibadan, the theme of which was "What is Freedom?" The present issue is devoted entirely to the other papers and the symposium of the Conference. The theme itself, of course, has hardly been exhausted; perhaps, in the nature of the case, it never can be. The speakers were unanimous in declaring that there is no such thing as absolute freedom, and unanimous as well in their rejection of determinism; it may be noted that discussion of the topic pre-supposes that thought, at least, is not determined. If there is a common strain running through papers and symposium it is this, that the freedom which is of preeminent concern to mankind is not an abstraction, but something which can be gained or lost, and furthermore, that there are types of freedom, of which the highest is the paradoxical "freedom in obedience" of religious faith.

In conclusion, we of the editorial staff of *Orita* would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the University of Ibadan on this, the twenty-fifth anniversary of its establishment, and to express our hope that it will continue to flourish.

Books Received

Oxford University Press

R. E. Bradbury, *Benin Studies*, 1973, £4.00 stg., ₦8.80.

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

American Consultative Council, *Partners in Mission*, 1973, 60 pp.

Adrian Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa*, 1973, 60 pp.



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